THE FICTION OF
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Dedicated

To My Beloved Mother

Mrs. Navaneetham Nathaniel

FOREWORD

The Tamil novel is regarded as the dominant literary mode of our times As a serious form Tamil novels convey the true life and literature in the works of Dr. M. Varadarajan who occupies an important place among the contemporary Tamil novelists. So there is no wonder in taking the fiction of Dr Mu. Va. by Thiru. Daniel Deva Sangeetham for his research. The scholar has benefitted by Prof. N. Subbu Reddiar's advice and guidance.

The scholar tries to find out the reason for selecting novel as a tool to give to Dr. Mu. Va.'s thoughts and feelings. He has succeeded in his attempt to perceive in Mu. Va.'s fiction the combined personality of a thinker and an artist. According to the scholar, Mu. Va.'s fiction is based on various problems which go to form the modern society. Among the Seventeen works of fiction the idea of including Ki. Pi. 2000 as an utopian fantacy is really interesting.

Among the Ten chapters in this book the author attempts the special characteristic features of the characters in Dr. Mu. Va.'s novels in chapter Three. He has succeeded in attempting to find out the individuality of the protagonists. Though it is a difficult study he is able to escape from them, and has adduced apt reasons for his selection. Without any bias he has examined the characters. The study of minor characters throws light on the ability of Dr. Mu. Va. to select various types of men and women around him. It is very interesting to read the passage about the internal and external conflicts of certain characters who are considered to be the back bone of anti-plot novels.

He has approached the simple clear grand and powerful style of Dr. Mu Va. in literary approach. The strenuous effort of the scholar is shown in pointing out the flash-back technique and the technique of foreshadowing in order to

integrate the sequence of events in Dr. Mu. Va.'s novels. Without any reservation he admits the fact that Dr. Mu. Va. has not established himself as a successful short story writer. This sincerity is commendable.

The scholar successfully attempted to bring out the messages of Dr. Mu. Va. delivered through his novels. The book is of a very high order as a research thesis.

MADRAS
Dt. 24-8-1978

DR. S.V. SUBRAMANIAN, M.A., Ph.D.
DIRECTOR,
International Institute of Tamil Studies.

PREFACE

Tamil literature the glory of which is a continuity of literary tradition for over two millennia is at the present day particularly distinguished for the excellence of the contributions to it in the modern *genres* of the novel and the short story. Among the contemporary novelists in Tamil Dr. M. Varadarajan occupies a place of special distinction and importance. With My deep interest in present day Tamil literature in general, I felt impelled to make a study in depth of the fiction of Dr. Mu Va. I had the good fortune and privilege of meeting the late Mu. Va and of obtaining his blessings for my endeavour of research. I owe much to his encouragement of my venture.

I hardly have words to express my debt of gratitude to my teacher and research supervisor Prof. N. Subbu Reddiar. I have benefited greatly by his expert advice and kindly guidance at every stage of my work. He gave very generously of his time, energy and knowledge, and has laid me in un-repayable debt to his expertise in scholarship and research.

I am extremely thankful to Dr. S.V. Subramanianar, Director, International Institute of Tamil Studies, Madras for his kind foreword and encouragement.

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TIRUPATI — DANIEL DEVA SANGEETHAM

1-9-1978.

THE FICTION OF DR. M. VARADARAJAN

Materials on which the study is based

A. Novels

1. Akal-vilakku
2. Alli
3. Anta-nal
4. Centamarai
5. Kallo? Kaviyamo?
6. Karit-tuntu
7. Kayamai
8. Malar-vili
9. Man-kuticai
10. Nencil Oru Mul
11. Pavai
12. Perramanam
13. Vata-malar

B. Utopian Fiction

14. Ki. Pi. 2000

C. Socio-Economic Commentary

15. Paliyum-Pavamum

D. Short Stories

16. Kurattai Oli
17. Vitutalaiya?

CONTENTS

P. No.

Foreword ... i

Preface ... iii

The Materials on which this study is based ... iv

Chapter I – Introduction ... 1

Chapter II – Characterization in His Novels ... 9

Chapter III - The Protagonists of The Novels ... 23

Chapter IV – Minor Characters – Men ... 63

Chapter V – Minor Characters - Women ... 101

Chapter VI – Plot Constructions in the Novels ... 143

Chapter VII – The Author's Style ... 173

Chapter VIII – Technique of Narration ... 199

Chapter IX – A Brief Study of His Short Stories ... 221

Chapter X – The Author's Philosophy of Life ... 237

Select Bibliography ... 259

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The novel is not only one of the newer forms of literature but a form of literature in which the twentieth-century consciousness finds its characteristic expression. The novel may be regarded as the dominant literary mode of our times. A new growth in Tamil literature, which had its rise in the nineteenth century, the novel in Tamil has registered a great development in modern times. The Tamil novel has evolved not merely as a phenomenally popular form of entertainment and amusement, but as a serious art form which can suitably convey the true modern sensibility in life and literature at the hands of writers like Mu. Va and Kalki. Many of the striking developments in the form and technique of the novel which have taken place in western literatures in this age of the novel have been adopted by some of the major Tamil novelists of the present century like Mu. Va. It is but natural that Mu. Va. turned his attention to this field and selected this literary form as a tool to give vent to his thoughts and feelings He is known more as a novelist by the majority of people than as a philologist or a literary critic. In addition, we are able to perceive in his fiction the combined personality of a thinker, a critic, a philologist, a professor and above all an artist.

It is the unique feature of Dr. Mu. Va. that he employs simple words and stimulating phrases for communicating his thoughts in a lucid manner. I am one of the thousands of young readers who have been attracted by his simple, racy and fluent style. I had developed fascination for Mu. Va's fiction even as a child. In my High School days I used to read some of his novels, short stories and epistolary writings. As a student of M.A. class I had an occasion to study his novel *Akalvilakku* which secured the Central Sahitya Akademi award. At this level I enjoyed the artistic taste inculcated in me by Mu. Va's novels. No wonder I have chosen the fiction

of Mu. Va for prosecuting my research. Mu. Va's novels are not written merely for pastime. Every novel and short story of his is written with a lofty ideal. The plot construction of each novel is designed in such a way as to emphasize that high ideal in various levels. It is but natural that the incidents are few in his novels and the ideas arising out of those incidents are many. Therefore, those who read his fiction to while away the time cannot sit in judgement over his works which are thought-provoking apart from evoking the interest of the readers. They do not come under the 'New wave Novels' which mainly aim at describing vividly the various aspects of the physical appearance of women in general and thus appeal to the adolescent readers. Nor his works have anything like a period touch. They are the works based on various problems and aspects which go to form the modern consciousness.

Among Mu. Va's works I have chosen only his fiction for my research purpose. The total number of his works of fiction is seventeen. There are thirteen novels, two collections of short stories, a utopian fantasy *(Ki. Pi 2000)*, and a socio-economic discourse *(Paliyum Pavamum)*. Some critics look upon these *(Ki. Pi. 2000* and *Paliyum Pavamum)* as novels and mention the total number of his novels as fifteen.[1] There are others who do not associate them with novels but confer a separate status on them and group them under 'imaginative stories'[2]. In my research work I have not included them with novels as they do not have the basic features of a novel. In these works the author has selected a theme and has explored its various possibilities In *Ki. Pi. 2000* the novelist creates a utopian world and describes the life of people and the various changes in politics in economic structure and in social order that are likely to take place in A.D. 2000. We cannot find in it the element of story which serves as the back-bone of the novel nor any plot which serves as its skeleton nor any heart-winning characters which give flesh and blood to the skeleton. In *Paliyum Pavamum* the author adduces the economic imbalance of the urban and rural areas of the country as the only reason for all the evils of the society. Besides this, he does not fail to point out the defects of the educational system of the state In this work, the author enumerates

various evils that overcome us if we allow ourselves to be ruled by wealth and in *Ki Pi 2000* he assumes the probable changes that are likely to take place in A D 2000 if wealth is given a place of secondary importance. In other words, he diagnoses the social diseases in the former and suggests the suitable remedies in the latter. The author depicts in detail the present day society and also expresses his own conception of an ideal society. He does not give primary importance either to the characters or to the stories. Therefore, I have not examined these two works along with the thirteen novels but have dealt with them in the chapter "The Author's Philosophy of Life".

Before explaining the content of this thesis I desire to stress one point. The topic I have chosen for discussion is allied to Modern Literature. There is dearth for works of literary criticism on fiction in Tamil literature and that branch of study is still in budding stage. Therefore, I have referred to important critical works of English literature and in the light of these treatises I have tried to study the Fiction of Mu. Va.

Let me now explain the plan of my thesis. It consists of twelve chapters including the introductory and the concluding chapters. In Chapter Two I have attempted a brief biographical sketch of the author with the help of authentic data gathered from certain books, journals and periodicals apart from the oral information given by the relatives of the author, his colleagues and friends. When the author was alive I met him and got first hand informations regarding certain events of his life which I have incorporated in this chapter. Chapter Three deals with the art of characterization in his novels Here, I have shown how the western scholars have studied the art of characterization in fiction and in the light of the principles evolved by them, I have analysed the characters in Mu. Va's novels. I have also examined the critical views of certain Indian critics regarding the characters of Mu. Va's novels, weighed them judiciously and impartially and given my own opinion of their opinions. I have also pointed out certain special characteristic features in Mu Va's creation of his men

and women. In Chapter Four dealing with the protagonists of his novels I have made a fairly thorough study of thirteen heroes and heroines of his novels. The study of the protagonists of Mu. Va's novels individually is the first of its kind. The selection of the protagonists of his novels involves certain difficulties in view of the enigmatic titles of some novels and the apparently misleading statements of certain critics. I have chosen these protagonists after deep deliberation and adduced apt reasons for my selecting them as heroes and heroines. I have taken pains to examine profoundly each character without any bias or any preconceived notions. This kind of critical analysis, I may legitimately claim, is the first of its kind. In the concluding lines of this chapter, I have given a brief comparative study of certain main characters.

The Fifth and Sixth Chapters deal with the study of minor characters of men and women respectively.[3] I have classified these characters into certain well-defined groups on the basis of their age, character, profession and relationship. The main advantage of this kind of classification is that it throws light on the author's keen powers of observation and profound study of various types of men around him. In certain cases I have compared some of these characters with the characters of western literature. In general I have pointed out how some of these minor characters have played a vital role in the construction of plot and in explaining the themes of the novels. In the appendices[4] I have given a catalogue of those characters whom I have considered unimportant for my study.

Chapter Seven deals with the plot construction in the novels. Here, I have explained the term 'plot' as interpreted by the western critics. I have also pointed out how the many events which he had come across in his life and the characteristics of certain men whom he had observed had been useful in the fabrication of the plots. I have also read certain new ideas into the structures of his novels. I have further explained that in many of his novels Mu. Va had not given primary importance to the story nor to the plot construction; but has held in high esteem the ideas, and the conversations based on these ideas. I have taken pains to illustrate all my findings

I have also explained how the internal and external conflicts of certain characters had been the back-bone of certain anti-plot novels. At the end of this Chapter I have pointed out those parts of the novels which really touch our heart.

The Eighth Chapter deals with the style of the author. One can approach the style of any author in two ways namely linguistic approach and literary approach. I have chosen the latter in studying the style of the author. After referring to the pronouncement of some critics on style in general and on dialogues in particular I have emphasised the dominent role which the dialogue plays in Mu. Va's novels. The secret of appeal of his novels lies in the diulogue, I have also refuted by adducing sufficient reasons, the idea harped on *ad nauseam* by certain critics that all the characters of Mu. Va. speak in one voice the same language. I have argued that Mu. Va's style has won successfully an enviable place in Tamil literature by pointing out the various places, where his style is in harmony with the feelings of persons, descriptions of places and the demands of satire and symbolism. I have also stressed the simplicity, clarity and the grandeour of his style which has been highly influenced by the impacts of his knowledge of Tamil literature, especially the ancient literature.

"The study of technique" observes J.W. Beach "is a useful preparation for the business of criticism as well as our interesting thing in itself".[5] Therefore, in the next Chapter, (Chapter Nine) I have made a study of the techniques of narration in his novels. To start with I have pointed out many techniques of narration adopted by western novelists. I have brought out many 'points of view' as found in Mu. Va's novels and also shown how these 'points of view' aptly befit his novels. I have specially pointed out how he has employed 'flash back technique' and the technique of foreshadowing in order to integrate various events sequentially. I have further explained how he has introduced epistolary modes and diaries to expose the hidden-thoughts of the sub-conscious mind of certain characters.

Chapter Ten embodies the study of Mu. Va's short stories. It is a matter of common knowledge that short story is not a rival to, or a substitute for the novel, but another kind of prose fiction which has grown up alongside of the novel, and has now attained an important place in Modern Literature. It is noteworthy that Mu. Va. has not established any reputation as a successful short story writer. But there are in his two collections, a few stories which can rank with the best short stories of the world. I have explained how certain characters in his short stories have occupied a permanent place in the readers' mind and how their special characteristics have been brought out by the writer in a unique manner. I have also explained how the author has adroitly introduced certain rare themes in his stories. Lastly, I have shown how the author makes himself appear in the guise of many characters and illustrates certain aspects of his own biography.

Chapter Eleven is completely different from the rest of the chapters wherein I have shown Mu. Va. as an artist. But here I have tried my best to depict Mu. Va. as a thinker and as a reformer of social evils and above all to bring out the various messages delivered by him through his fiction. In Mu. Va. we see a rare combination of an artist and a thinker, a sort of dual personality like *Artanariswara* of Hindu mythology and this accounts for the profuse wealth of art as well as thinking in his works The artist in Mu. Va. has made use of the manifold problems that abound in society as the source of his novels and the thinker in Mu. Va, in his own way, has offered solutions to those problems. I have made this chapter a compendium of the various ideas of Mu. Va in respect of sex, love, marriage, society, religion, education and art and life.

Thus I have shown the place of Mu. Va's fiction in the realm of Tamil novel and his substantial contribution to the development of novel literature in Tamil. In addition to this, I have shown that Mu. Va is a unique writer among the Tamil novelists especially in matters of his manipulation of various component parts of a novel like characters, techniques of narration and style. His simple but elegant style flows like a

calm, unruffled stream and captivates the hearts of innumerable young readers of the Tamil-knowing public not only in Tamilnadu but also in the various nooks and corners of the world.

NOTES :

1. M.R P. Kuruswamy and others.
2. Dr. Dhandayudham and others.
3 For details vide Appendices 2 (a) and 3 (a).
4. Vide Appendices 2 (b) and 3 (b),
5. *The Twentieth Century Novel*, p. 3.

NOTE : Chapter II and XII have been deleted in this book for want of space.

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5. *The Twentieth Century Novel*, p. 13.

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CHAPTER II

CHARACTERIZATION IN HIS NOVELS

In dealing with the element of characterization we are met at the outset by one of those elementary questions which even the most uncritical reader is certain to ask himself. Does the novelist succeed in making his men and women appear real to our imaginations? Do they stand upright on the ground? Are they similar to those whom we come across in this mundane world? For all practical purposes the creations of Dr. Mu. Va in his novels, I feel, fulfil these basic conditions. Characters created by Mu. Va. attract the readers by virtue of their substance and life-like quality. When we read his novels and are engrossed in the story we know and believe in them as thoroughly, sympathise with them as deeply, and love and hate them as cordially, as though they belonged to the world of flesh and blood. We are more or less in their grip and an element of sympathy over-powers us.

I feel that some of Mu. Va's critics appear to be unfair and even unimaginative with regard to his characters. Xavier S. Thani Nayagam in one of his essays observes: "Ideas and discussions dominate Varadarajan's fiction. Ideas are so important that the personality of the characters which express them tends to disappear in the shadows of their ideas ...... His characters are remembered, not by their humanity but by their thought content".[1] Dr. K. Kailasapathy in a small critical treatise on novel literature states: "The characters in Varadaracan's novels do not appear as men with bones and flesh. They are the representatives of human thought".[2] Another young critic M. Ramalingam is of the view: "We are able to see his (Varadaracan's) characters on the basis of his principles. When they give up the principles we cannot see them as ordinary men. So, for ordinary readers they do not appear as real people. The reason for such a seeming defect may perhaps be that Mu. Va reveals himself more as a thinker than as an artist".[3] Similar views are expressed by S. Senthilnathan,[4]

Elil Muthalvan,[5] T.V. Seetharaman[6] and M.D. Rasakumar.[7] All of them seem to express in one voice that the characters in Varadaracan's novels are not real but artificial.

I am of the view that this criticism can be proved to be unsound, if one realises the psychology of the creative genius in Mu. Va with which such characters are made to live in his novels. The aim of an artist is not strictly to portray life-situations as they are nor to show living persons in the world as they seem to be. By this no purpose can be served. By portraying situations and persons with some modifications the novelist endeavours to elevate the life of the people. A skilled artist is specially known by his power of judicious selection and accumulation of facts with significant details and organising them in types in such a way as to stimulate the imagination of the reader by his masterly touches. "The writer" says Somerset Maugham, "does not copy his originals; he takes what he wants from them, a few traits that have caught his attention, a turn of mind that has fired his imagination and there from constructs his character. He is not concerned whether it is truthful likeness; he is concerned only to create a plausible harmony convenient for his own purpose"[8] A similar view has been expressed by E.M. Forster who says : "If a character in a novel is exactly like Queen Victoria-not rather like but exactly like – then it actually is Queen Victoria, and the novel, or all of it that the character touches, becomes a memoir. A memoir is history, it is based on evidence. A novel is based on evidence plus or minus X the unknown quantity being the temperament of the novelist, and the unknown quantity always modifies the effect of the evidence, and sometimes transforms it entirely".[9] William Henry Hudson's opinion on this point gives an additional weight. "Intensity of conception and what I have called realistic imagination are doubtless at the bottom of it. But it is well to remember that the process of creation are confessedly as mysterious to those who possess such creative power as they are to other people".[10] If one knows the mind of the author himself with regard to principles of characterization one will not pass such uncharitable remarks on his characterization. In a paper presented by him in a seminar Mu. Va himself says : "I am a type of a person.

So the characters that I come across in a novel may be of the same type. It is no wonder if they appear to be so. Those who want to while away time like me only will agree with me".[11] In the same paper he reveals his mind about the type of characters he desires to create: "My mind always inclines towards persons who elicit our appreciation or sympathy by dedicating themselves to serve society on certain set principles unmindful of their success or failure. My mind cannot greatly appreciate them if such people are created as if they are endowed with divine grace at birth or those shown as easily winning the admiration of the society. But my mind always appreciates only such persons who are born as ordinary men, and live in ordinary environments facing all vicissitudes of fortune but live with an endless desire to follow certain high principles and to perform good deeds".[12]

We are led to understand that Mu. Va's novels generally deal with life's experience. Some good characters created in his novels show what life should be. His eharacters are all ordinary men susceptible to the successes and failures in life. Life portrayed by the novelist appears very much real. The men and women who lead such dedicated lives remain permanently in our minds. Thackeray's experience of creating his characters agrees more or less with Mu. Va's. Thackeray speaks of this power as "occult" – as a power which seemed at times to grasp the pen from his fingers and move it in spite of himself. In his own words – "I don't control my characters; I am in their hands, and they take me to where they please".[13] When we see such characters as Mokan in *Karit-tuntu* and Mankai in *Kallo? Kaviyamo?* we believe that they take their author along with them, just as they pleased. He had endowed them with independent volition and by so doing he had, to a large extent, placed them beyond the range of his calculations. I am of the conviction that the experience of every writer of real creative genius will be like that of Thaekeray or Mu. Va when they portray the characters of all types.

Some Special Features of Characters :

The one peculiar trend that we notice in all the ideal characters created by Mu. Va. is that many of them are good

men and are shown as morally committed and committed as altruist. Their mental hygine is very good. They all love ethical principles and try to lead life in the light of those principles. Some of them live only for those principles. When they face the worst in their lives, they are even ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of those ethical principles. In short, they have a view that 'life should be lived like *this*'. Their principles are not theoretical. They derive these principles from the lives of great men such as Lord Jesus Christ, Lord Buddha, St. Appar, St. Tayumanavar, Ramathirthar, Gandhiji and others. One notices that these characters generally read *Tirukkural*, *The Holy Bible*, *The Saivite Tirumurais*, *The Vaisnavite's Prabandhas* and the hymns of *Tayumanavar* and meditate on them and always keep their minds clean. They are all lovers of simple living and high thinking. They derive pleasure in their simple life. They take interest in the lives of the poor. They dislike people who are enamoured of costly costumes and those who live in luxury. They care more for inward beauty and dignity rather than outward attractions and paraphernalia. They are all thinkers. Therefore their thoughts regulate their lives in straightforward ways. The lives of Parvati in *Nencil Oru Mul*, Dr. Alli in Alli, Menmoli and Nallayyan in *Kayamai* Cutarvili in *Vatamalar* and Velayyan in *Akal-vilakku* can be cited as instances for such characters.

Methods of Characterization :

In a study of prose fiction the psychological factor of characterization is to be understood. The conditions of any novel commonly permit the novelist the use of two opposed metods, namely the direct or analytical and the indirect or dramatic in the creation of characters. In the former the novelist portrays his characters objectively. Standing at a distance, he dissects their passions, motives, thoughts and feelings, explains, comments and often pronounces outhoritative judgements upon them with neither favour nor disfavour. In the latter case also he stands apart, allows his characters to reveal themselves through their speech and action, and reinforces their self-delineation by the comments and judge-

ments or critical remarks of other characters, major or minor, in the story.[14] Those who study Fnglish fiction may observe a distinct bias towards one or the other of these methods. Williams Make Peace Thackeray though makes admirable use of the indirect method, supports its result by an enormous amount of personal inter-relations and criticism. But George Eliot employs direct analysis and invariably she overdoes it also. This trend is generally noticed in all the psychological novelists. One may observe in Jane Austen's work the predominance of the dramatic element. The characters introduced by her mostly portray themselves through dialogue while she herself continually throws cross-lights upon them in the conversation of the different people by whom they are discussed. Thus in general we observe that the very form of a novel as a compound of narrative and dialogue practieally involves a combination of the dramatic and non-dramatic especially in the handling of the characters. Modern criticism on fiction rightly favours the fullest possible development of the dramatic technique. "The principle that it is always better that a character should be made to reveal itself than be dissected from outside, is thoroughly sound"[15].

In the study of Mu. Va's fiction one notices in general that most of his characterization is based on these two techniques. For the creation of characters in the direct or analytical method, the Head Clerk Anavar in *Kayamai*. the hero of the novel, may be cited as the best example. In the opening chapter of the novel itself the novelist portrays his physical features as if they reveal his mental attitude. Says the author: "The black dense moustache in his brown-complexioned face and his cropped head with here and there a few grey hairs glistening like silver wires showed his age. Those who happen to see him can easily understand that his age was not below forty but not above fifty. Though he was a Bachelor of Arts there was not a symptom of politeness either in his face or his person to testify to his education. His voice was boorish well suited to his tough body. His look also was in tune with his rudeness. Those who come across him for the first time will easily conclude that he is an illiterate brute who got wealth somehow and by that civilized life .... The very

sight of him leaning back in the big office-chair will lead one to think that he was a person without any work and his attitude was to while away his time. If some body calls on him he would pretend as though he was always busy and the visitor would think that he was a very busy person"[16]. In addition to this character, Palani in *Pavai* and Muniyamma in *Perramanam* also come under this category.

For characters created in the indirect or dramatic method Collector Celvanayakam in *Malarvili*, Tanappan in *Vatamalar*, Mokan in *Karit-tuntu* Mankai in *Kallo? Kaviyamo?* Cantiran in Akalvilakku, Meyyappan in *Mankuticai*, Vativu in *Nencil Oru Mul* may be mentioned as the best instences. The author does not make a direct mention of collector Celvanayakam in any context. But one can understand what Celvanayakam is through the dialogues of Muttayyan (Railway Ticket-collector who is made to narrate the whole story), Annamalai (a clerk in the collector office), Mani (another Tickct Collector), Malarvili (wife of Naku) and Malaikkannar (Headmaster), they make references to this character at different contexts in the story. Similarly the complete picture of Cantiran in *Akal-vilakku* is made known to the readers by the dialogues between Velayyan (the narrator of the story) and Imavati, between Malan (a class-mate of Cantiran) and Velayyan, Karpakam (Cantiran's younger sister) and Velayyan and so on. Similar instances can be multiplied.

Types of Characters :

E.M Forster classifies characters as flat characters and round characters. In the light of this classification a comprehensive analysis of the characters created by Mu. Va in his novels can be studied. Flat characters, according to him, were called humorous in the seventeenth century, and are sometimes called types and sometimes caricatures. "In their purest form, they (flat characters) are constructed round a single idea or a quality: when there is more than one factor in them, we get the beginning of the curve towards the round"[17]. In Mu. Va's novels one comes across both types of

characters. For flat characters, Venkatecan in *Kayamai*, Aravali in *Nencil Oru Mul* and *Alli*, Meykantar, Meyyappan in *Mankuticai* and Murukayya in *Vatamalar* may be cited as the best instances. According to modern criticism on fiction "the flat character is the only one which could serve the purpose of the novelist: it is his necessary vehicle for conveying a certain vision of life"[18]. The flat characters cannot develop further because of their unchangeability. The novelist sets them in new situations to change their relations with one another, and in all these, to make them behave typically. "The task of the character novelist" says Edwin Muir, "is more like choreographers than dramatists: he has to keep his figures moving rather than acting: and for the most part he has them masked"[19]. One can see in Venkatecan in *Kayamai* only one characteristic and throughout the story he is made to observe all the atrocities and evil designs of Anavar and to reveal them at opportune moment. Meykantar in *Mankuticai* is a didactic character who is made only to preach morals in different situations. Aravali who appears in two novels – *Nencil Oru Mul* and *Alli* – a Graduate Assistant in some school is also a didactic character who both while in service and after retirement figures as a preacher of morals to students and householders and sometimes he even settles the family disputes.

The introduction of flat characters presents two advantages. Wherever they come they are easily recognised – recognised by the reader's emotional eye; not by the visual eye which merely notes the recurrence of a proper name. "It is a convenience for an author when he can strike with his full force at once, and flat characters are very useful to him since they never need reintroducing, never run away, have not to be watched for development, and provide their own atmosphere – little luminous disks of a prearranged size, pushed hither and thither like counters across the void or between the stars; most satisfactory"[20]. The character Aravali (*Alli, Nencil Oru Mul*) Meykantar (*Mankuticai*), Arulappar (*Perramanam*) and Murukayya (*Vata-malar*) can be cited as best instances for this. These characters are identified very easily by their static and unchanging traits and actions.

The second advantage is that they are easily remembered by the reader. They remind him as unalterable, for they are not changed by circumstances. Even when the book that contains them may become ruins, the characters live for ever. Such characters as Velayyan in *Akal-vilakku*, Anavar in *Kayamai*, Celvanayakam in *Malarvili*, Aravali in *Nencil Oru Mul* and *Alli*, Arulappar in '*Kallo? Kaviyamo?*' that live for ever in the reader's mind.

As regards round characters in Mu. Va's novels Cantiran in *Akalvilakku*, Tanappan in *Vatamalar*, Mankai in *Kallo? Kaviyamo?* and Mokan in *Karit-tuntu* are the best instances of round characters They cannot be summed up in a single sentence. They are tethered much more to observation. They are more highly organised, they function all round and if the novelist's plot made greater demands on them than it does, they would still be adequate. Let me try to illustrate with one or two characters just referred to above. At the beginning of the story in *Akal-vilakku* Cantiran appears to be a young High School pupil with a sharp intellect Everybody praises his intellect as well as his handsome appearance (from the old lady in the person of a fruit-vendor to the School Inspector). After his school career an appreciable change is noticed both in his physical appearance and mental attitude. In his college days he misunderstands Imavati's behaviour and falls in love with her. When he is rejected, he discontinues his college education and runs away to Nilgiris. There he develops an illicit relationship with one Tayamma and emerges as a man of lust. When his whereabouts is known, his father with the good-offices of Velayyan and the local Headmaster brings him to his homevillage. Here too Cantiran is depicted as a man of lust who is unable to control his urge. He begins to sow his wild oats and spares no girl who can serve his purpose. Later we see him suffering from an attack of leprosy completely disfigured and with a sorrow-stricken face. As the moon in the sky, we see another moon on earth (Cantiran) and his waxing-waning changes. The following confession of Cantiran to Velayyan touches our heart : "When you were like an earthern-lamp (vase) I was like a brass-lamp; I glittered for sometime. All the people admired my intellect

as well as my hand-someness. For what? In due course the oil was exhausted, the wick was burnt out and the light is almost extinguished. I am now in that condition. But you like an earthern-lamp are burning brighter in a state of tranquility''[21]. An elucidation of the character of Tanappan in *Vata-malar* will throw much light on this point. He is an unfortunate child who loses his mother at a very early age. He is treated like Cinderella at the hands of his step-mother and faces many cruelties and atrocities. Fear is found to be the only dominant element in him at this stage. This is the picture of young Tanappan at the beginning of the story. One fine day he absconds from home. He runs away to Madras and settles in service in a small hotel. There we do not see him as a docile and submissive Tanappan. We see him as a youtn who has seen the ways of the world. Though he has not had opportunity of learning books, he has learnt well the men and matters of the world. He has grown up into a very crude and ranting ruffian. Later when he returns home we see an unusual change in him. He becomes the proprietor of a big hotel in his native town. Now, he is seen as the richest man in that locality, daring and courageous in whatever matters he involves himself. One day when he hears a lecture of Tiru Vi. Ka. a sudden change overcomes him. Rowdyism, earning money by unfair means and other vices disappear from him. Instead, he turns into almost child-like character. Thus, in the above mentioned two characters we are able to perceive a development.

In the characterization of fiction we observe two methods employed by the novelist. In one, the characters emerge from a chronological account of a group of events and the characters' reaction to those events. In this method the reader cannot, at first, completely understand their nature. In the second method he introduces in the first or an earlier chapter a character and gives a rounded description of the character, When the reader comes across the character at any point of the story when he goes through the novel, he at once recognises him and the full picture of his nature comes to his mind. Writers of fiction have employed either of these two methods and some have employed both at the first instance. If

one goes through the novels of Mu. Va one can see that in some novels he empioys either one of the methods and in some both the methods are employed in combination. In Mu. *Va's Kallo? Kaviyamo?* there is no set description of Mankai's character at the beginning of the story or indeed anywhere else. In the first chapter she is simply a young girl serving as an assistant to her aunt who was a vegetable vendor. Later she serves as a maid-servant in Arulappar's house. Arulappar and his parents treat her not as a servant but more as a member of the family. During her stay in that house she picks up reading and writing and very soon she emerges as an enlightened girl. Arulappar marries her. Till then there is no hint of her real nature. Her personality reveals itself as the story proceeds. The misunderstanding between husband and wife, Mankai's disappearance from the house on that account, her going away to Bombay, her service in a hotel without spoiling her chastity - from all these events the novelist unfolds her chaıacter step by step. Even then Mankai's character is not fully revealed. She meets Arulappar in the same hotel by chance, and then returns home, and her daughter Temoli's refusal to recognise her as her mother and later her deatn reveal something more about her. We may argue that her character is not fully presented until the story is concluded. The author manages to give us a full view of her character by taking her through a long and varied sequence of events. Any criterion of consistency we may apply can concern only the relation of one action or reaction of Mankai to another; there is no referring back to an original prose portrait because the author has not given one. Vativu in *Nancil Oru Mul,* and Kancanai in *Malarvili* can be cited as other instances of character-development by this method. In this method the characters as we see them at first, are shadowy and indeterminate creatures. But after their reactions to a chronoiogical series of events we feel that they are living personalities

The other method can be illustrated by the character of Menmoli in *Kayamai.* This character is introduced in the Eighth Chapter of the novel. Menmoli is a new entrant in the clerical cadre undcr the supervision of the Head-clerk in the office. After her brilliant school career her family circum-

stances force her to take up a profession without prosecuting her further studies even though she has an aptitude for higher education. With great reluctance she is permitted to accept a job. Hailing from a cultured family and being brought up in the line of orthodox Hindu tradition she is very polite, docile and generally shy. The author brings out the contrast between this girl and another clerk, Vacikaram, hailing from a rich family and highly sophisticated in all her attitudes and outlook. The description by the author, of these two characters is really excellent and one should enjoy it in the original.[22] The two salient features that attract any one who comes across them by chance is that in external appearance Manmoli is modest, beautiful by nature and her face beams with innocence and high culture. The other clerk Vacikaram is highly sophisticated, and seductive. In one the dress is simplc, the ornaments are not gaudy showing that she is not placed in affluent circumstances; in the other the dress is costly, ornaments are showy and she is practically not very modest. Another contrast is that Menmoli was endowed with inner beauty and this feature slowly comes to light only after some time to the office people, where as in Vacikaram, inner beauty is completely absent and the so-called outward beauty artificially made up is the only dominating feature. Menmoli's innocence and straightforwardness and above all her modesty are clearly revealed in her relations with Anavar and Nallayyan and in her uprightness which prompts her to sacrifice things for the sake of Nallayyan. Similarly, a complete description of Veluppillai in the First Chapter of *Pavai* is given and whereever we come across him in the story we recognise him and his significance without any difficulty.

Most effective of all from the point of view of those whose chief interest in ficton lies in its psychological aspects is the techniques which combines the foregoing two methods. Mu. Va's novels *Nencil Oru Mul* provides a good example for this. The novelist introduces the character of Parvati as follows :

"Her (Parvati's) natural beauty was very attractive. Her face was like that of one in a picture drawn by a

good artist. A small fore-head, black curved eye-brows, pointed nose, lips resembling those of a child, shining cheeks were all in delicate proportion to make Parvati very charming. I have seen in many young girls that if one feature was in good proportion the other would be on the contrary. I saw in Parvati all good features were in proportionate combination and appreciated them within myself. My mind thought how beautiful her nice neck would be if gold and diamonds were to adorn it. My eyes saw only a pseudo-pearl necklace which may cost only a couple of rupees. There was a peculiar beauty even in her lime-like complexion. Whenever her eyes looked at me I thought that they were beckoning me to have an affectionate relationship with her."[23]

Here her physical appearance is revealed. The conversation that takes place on the sea-shore[24] and that which takes amongst Vativu, Cantira and Parvati when the first two were playing carom reveal her inner attitude and personality. When we meet Parvati in the story we are given a fairly adequate sketch of her character and circumstances. Yet we do not know her completely. A full understanding of her nature comes only after we have watched her reactions to the events which constitute the story and studied her own part in the shaping of those events. Mu. Va has remarkably availed himself of both the methods.

It may be thought that a novelist's success in characterization often depends upon his faculty of description. But this method alone may not be one of the successful ways of making a character live before us. A skilled artist always employs some other method. He selects and accumulates significant incidents and stimulates the imagination of the reader by slight occasional personal touches. We see this special power in Mu. Va when he makes his characters live before us. The author brings out the impatient and restless behaviour of Cantiran by the kite-flying incident.[25] In *Vatamalar* when Tanappan throws a stone in the gutter, mud splashes on all sides : even this is highly symbolic.[26] Similar

incidents can be seen in other novels bringing out certain features in the characters of those novels.

One can see a peculiar way in Mu. Va. in naming his characters. He gives such good names Aravali in *Nencil Oru Mul* and *Alli*, Meykantar, in *Mankuticai*, Arulappar in *Kallo? Kaviyamo?* Ceeralar in *Perramanam*, Menmoli in *Kayamai*, Manvili and Temoli in *Perramanam* more or less signifying in one or other of the characteristic way, peculiar feature and charming nature. It is the peculiar characteristic of the novelist Mu. Va. which a reader can find in giving pure Tamil names to these characters. Such names as Anavar in *Kayamai*, Akor in *Nencil Oru Mul*, Vaceekaram and Cakacampal in *Kayamai*, Cantiran and Malan in *Akal-vilakku* are given by the author to signify certain undesirable qualities such as arrogance, wickedness in those characters. These qualities will be seen either individually or in combination.

NOTES

1. *The Novelist of the City of Madras*, vide p. 18: ***Tamil Culture***, **Vol. X,** No. 2 April–June 1963.
2. *Tamil Novel Ilakkiam*, p. 230.
3. *Punaikatai valam*, p. 55.
4. *Tamarai*, January 1967 issue.
5. Ibid. February 1967 issue.
6. Ibid. March 1967 issue.
7. Ibid. April 1967 issue.
8. Quoted by Robert Liddell : ***A Treatise on the Novel***, p. 97.
9. *Aspects of the Novel*, pp. 52–53.
10. *An Introduction to the Study of Literature*, p. 145.
11. *Inraya Tamil Ilakkiattil Manithan*, p. 2.
12. ibid. p. 9.
13. Quoted by William Henry Hudson: ***An Introduction to the Study af Literature***, p. 145.
14. William Henry Hudson: *An Introeuction ts the Study of Literature*, pp. 146-147.
15. ibid. p. 147,
16. '*Kayamai*', p.5.
17. *Aspects of the Novel*, p. 75.
18. Edwin Muir : *The Structure of the Novel*, p. 26.
19. ibid p. 26.
20. "*Aspects of the Novel*", p. 26.
21. *Akalvilakku*, pp. 397–98.
22. *Kayamai*, pp. 117–119.
23. *Nencil Oru Mul*, p. 85. These are the words of Vativu, the heroine of the novel who narrates the story.
24. ibid. pp. 89–99.
25. *Akal-vilakku*, p. 28.
26. *Vata-malar*, pp. 6–7.

CHAPTER III

THE PROTAGONISTS OF THE NOVELS

The protagonists, otherwise known as heroes and heroines of Dr. Mu. Va's novels, are thirteen in number. Among them seven are men and the rest are women. Those who play a prominent role in the story, and those who are continuously present from the beginning to the end of the story have been selected as the central characters. In certain cases the name of a woman-character is given as the title of the novel. This may lead the readers to think that they are the heroines of those novels even though the author's intension may not be the same. But I have deviated from the general trend. I have selected only those characters who give a fillip and life to the essential fabric of the story as the heroine or hero of the novel. Among the readers there are some who consider Malarvili as the heroine of the novel *Malarvili* since the novel is named after her. There are others who regard Muttayyan the narrator of the story as its hero. But it is my firm conviction that collector Celvanayakam should be considered its hero because it is about him the story begins and ends at last. In other words the story is about Celvanayakam's family affairs. In *Centamarai,* though Ilanko, Centamarai, Marutappan, Tirunatan play a prominent role and narrate their own story in the first person, all of them in the course of their narration never forget to refer to the story of Tilakam. Further it is only Tilakam who figures in the story from its beginning to its end. For this reason I have selected Tilakam as the heroine of the novel. In the course of his narration Ilanko himself in one context compares Tilakam to a red lotus[1] (Centamarai) as many of those who are with and around her are not able to assess her real merit. This reference, I consider, is an additional support to my deviation. Similarly in *Antanal* Ponmuti, Kunamalai, Nilamekan, Vani and Arumukam narrate the story in the first person. But all of them refer to the story of Arumukam and all of them in one voice extol the finer sentiments of that character. Even though

Arumukam does not figure directly in many places in the novel all the other characters in the novel refer to him incessantly. Therefore I have chosen Arumukam as the hero of the novel. It is explicit and established beyond doubt that Cantiran in *Akal-vilakku*, Tanappan in *Vata-malar*, Meyyappan in *Man-kuticai*, Mokan in *Karit-tuntu*, Anavar in *Kayamai*, Pavai in *Pavai*, Mankai in *Kallo? Kaviyamo?*, Alli in *Alli* and Vativu in *Nencil Oru Mul* can be reasonably considered the heroes and heroines of the novels referred to

1. Tilakam

Beauty coupled with simplicity, an attractive appearance combined with grace, a youthful face beaming with intelligence and adorned with sparkling eyes: this in short is the person of Tilakam, the heroine of the novel *Centamarai*. Her delicate and slender body shows that she had once lived a life of comfort and luxury. Now her simple attire shows her acute poverty. In short, her upright and majestic stature, her innocent but stern look, her intelligent face all these remind us of the picture of a modern woman as portrayed in a poem by our National Poet Cuppiramaniya Parati.

Tilakam is bon and bred in an affluent family. Her father being a Tasildar commended, as many of the officers of this position do, various facilities by virtue of his position and power. After the sudden demise of her father there is a complete ehange in the family and in its environment. Her affectionate mother begins to believe the the predictions of an astrologer that the unexpected change in the family was due to the bad time at which her daughter Tilakam attained maturity, and even thinks to the extent of pushing her daughter into a well. Even her relatives and those who are near and dear to her begin to avoid her and her family. Her mother is almost driven to madness. Tilakam is unable to bear the mental agony and the ill-treatment meted out to her by the family members. So she runs out of her house. Even though at the beginning of the novel Tilakam is shown to posses the utmost patience, endurance and struggle for independence she does not attract us. It appears as though she does not belong

to the real world and seem to lack what can be termed "the life-force".

Tilakam graduates from a High School. It is but natural that one expects some progressive views in her. Bold in action, replying to any question without shyness, and sociable in nature she exhibits the features of an educated woman. So the community around her begin to heep slanders on her that she is not modest and polite and so she is not fit to be a family girl.

Tilakam takes her refuge in the house of a woman, who, though possesses good conduct, unfortunately hails from a family of traditional prostitutes. It is only obvious that Tilakam also is dubbed a prostitute. The society does not give any credit to Tilakam for her progressive views and her civilized conduct. It does not give any respect to her sharp intellect. It blindly labels her according to the circumstances that Fate has placed her in.

Being an intelligent girl Tilakam understands the ways of the world. Even though she does not have sufficient experience in the world she imbibes the experience of others and becomes very practical. Though quiet by nature she is firm In action. One does not find in her any daring or spirit of adventure. She acts only after serious contemplation. Her statement reflects her sharp intellect and experience :

> "Sometimes some defects in one's life seem to be good. If those defects are explicit they make one conscious of the defects and so one can become less arrogant or change oneself accordingly. These defects lead one to reflection It makes them thoughtful and makes them think before they speak and act. Such people grow in wisdom, attain efficiency and live for the benefit of others. Those who do not realize their defects lack in reflection, lead their lives according to their whims and fancies and perish, mainly due to the contempt of others."[2]

idea. It is this intelligence and discriminative capacity fostered by none but him (Arulappar) and his father – that has now created new problems for me".[6]

But this flash of sane thinking comes to no practical use to Mankai. She comes to the conclusion that Arulappar will not change his mind. Neither all her love and affection towards her husband nor the motherly passion for her tender Tenmoli could save her at the crucial moment. Finally she leaves the house under the erroneous impression that at least by her departure Arulappar would be happy and Tenmoli can grow into a brighter future under Arulappar. Thus Mankai's life and character present a cycle of external complications and internal conflicts. But, unfortunately, the ultimate resolution remains anything but the ideal. This cycle rolls on and on till her own life comes to a pathetic grinding halt. Yet, in Dr. Mu. Va's deft handling of her intellectual introspection and rational self-analysis at every step, Mankai's death does not fail to kindle the flame of human sympathy in every reader of Kallo ? Kaviyamo ?.

3. Pavai

Pavai the heroine of the novel *Pavai* is a young and beautiful girl who has not even completed her sixteenth year. She is the only daughter of Velupillai, a toddy merchant of Kampur. After her puberty her parents stop her studies with seventh class. She is confined to her house and lives within its four walls and she even takes pride in leading such a confined life. She has no chance of exploring the vast outside world. When Palani the son of the local village head–man wins the love of Pavai, her confinement to the house begins to lose its strength. Pavai begins to go out to an appointed place mutually agreed upon by her and her lover. But their frequent secret meetings do not last long. The watchful eyes of those around her house are not idle. They murmur about her ways and their slanderous utterances begin to spread. The difference in their status and in their castes stands in the way of their marriage. Though Palani is bold because of his youthfulness Pavai is modest and timid and so does not readily

accept the proposal of a secret wedding. The love–lorn Pavai reminds us of the heroine of the *Akam* poetry of the Cankam age. Pavai undergoes all the difficulties of the heroine who is separated from her secret lover. At this stage the author who has specialised in Cankam literature dwells at length on all the different stages of love and explains how they are not just theoretical but practical too. The only difference is that in the life of lovers in the Cankam age technical terminology was used but in the life of the present day lovers such teminology does not find its place. The life of Pavai according to the author is comparable with that of the heroine of Cenkam age as far as her unrequited love is concerned.

On the advice of one Ekamparam Cettiar the parents send Pavai to her aunt's house at some distant village so that people around may not make any slanderous utterances about her. In her aunt's house, Pavai changes into a different person. Pavai of Kampur reminds us of Shakespeare's Juliet. She is a very delicate, innocent love-lorn young girl who knows no solution for her love. She is a lady who because of her fear is unable to divulge her secret love to her parents. But Pavai at Velur is a different person altogether. She reminds us of Kannaki the heroine of *Cilappatikaram* who reduced the city of Madurai to ashes. Once when her maternal uncle Annacami attempts to molest her she rises to the occasion and resists like a courageous lady. Pavai like the heroine of Cankam age has a strong conviction that her modesty is dearer than her life. When her uncle Annacami tries to molest her she resists him boldly and thus saves her chastity. She regrets that she had not pulled his eyes out with the weapon in her waist. She even thinks that she should have ended his life.[7] She hits the ground with her fist where the unhappy incident has taken place. She even looks at that place where she has pushed her uncle and laughs. Looking at the sickle in her waist she states that she might have cut off his hands which touched her if she had that instrument at that time. One wonders how such a volcano has lodged within the soft heart of Pāvai. The series of actions performed by her – the cutting off of her hair, and dressing herself as a man and running away from her aunt's house in a dark–night – all these actions remind us and make

us compare her with Kannaki of *Cilappatikaram* She runs to Arcot from Velur in the dark night of the New Moon. This shows the strength of her chastity and pure love. We agree with the statement of Kannappar, the journalist, that Pavai leads a good and satisfactory life wherever the atmosphere is conductive, and wherever the atmosphere is against her tastes, her blood boils and she is prepared to do anything to change the circumstances.

In conclusion, one sees in the character of Pavai that this world creates anxieties and worries for women but it has no solutions for them. Such a world can be reformed only by bold women who possess the calibre of Pavai.

4. Arumukam

People who show unusual kindness to others somehow fail to live a successful life and they often put others in embarrassing situations. Arumukam the hero of the novel *Antanal* is such a person. During the Second World-War many Tamil families in Burma were stranded and many returned to Tamil Nadu on foot. Arumukam thinks that it would be safer for his wife Ponmuti and daughter Vani to return to Tamil Nadu before Rangoon is bombarded by the enemies. He discusses this with his wife and states that he would join them within a day or two after transacting some important official business in the company. Though his wife objects to his plan at first, consents unwillingly after much persuasion. Arumukam thinks that he would be considered ungrateful, if he left the company when the country was about to fall into the hands of its enemies. Being good-natured, Arumukam, refuses to believe that the company administration was only tempting him to stay, through attractive terms when the country was in danger. Arumukam is a very credulous person who believes that every thing is good and every person is a good person. It may be stated that the influence of the hymns of saints like Tayumanavar has helped him to develop such a good nature. Whenever he faces trials and tribulations he tries to forget them by going to a solitary place and reciting the hymns of Tayumanavar. According to the

statement of his wife Ponmuti, Arumukam seems to have been a dutiful husband :

> "Before marriage my mind was attracted by money, fame and other material temptations. But after marriage that is, after having attached, myself to you, other attachments have disappeared once for all"[8].

This statement of Arumukam is referred to by his wife. Sometimes the reader is led to presume that the author himself speaks through Arumukam emphasising the importance of women's education with an accent on dispelling their ignorance and enlightening them about domestic life. Another statement of Arumukam quoted by Ponmuti seems to be the novelist's personal comment :

> "If you want a happy domestic life you should learn the ways of the world and be a helpful mate to me. There are two phases in the world In one phase you see the politics which rules it ; in another you see the social structure which helps you to lead a happy life. If you are clever enough to study and understand both the phases we will be mutual helping guides so that our life will be a happy one"[9].

This statement no doubt echoes the views of the novelist.

We have already pointed out the credulous nature of Arumukam. He believes that his friend Nilamekan is a good person. Even when his wife states that Nilamekan has misbehaved with her and he should not associate himself with such an unscrupulous person, Arumukam does not change his attitude towards his friend.

According to the statement of Kunamalai the wife of Nilamekan, Arumukam is a man of sterling character and a sincere follower of ethical principles. When he happens to spend four nights with Kunamalai on his way to Tamil Nadu the purity of his conduct is established beyond doubt. He always thinks only of Ponmuti. He is completely devoted to Ponmuti and no one else.

There are three types of men in this world, There are some whose hearts are as hard and unfeeling as stone. Such people are not helpful or useful to others. The second category of people are those who possess hearts of gold. These people are moved when they behold others in difficulties. The third category of persons are extremely kind-hearted. They, like candles, sacrifice thir every thing to help others. Arumukam belongs to this type of persons who sacrifice themselves for the sake of others Whenever he comes across others in difficulties he makes every effort to help them even sacrificing his personal interest as well as the interest of his family. Our tears are evoked when we see him at the end dying like an orphan in a hospital at Calcutta after a bout of Malaria.

5. Celvanayakam

A perfect calmness beaming in his face but an air of official demeanour in his look and a tendency to take action only after a deep deliberation – these are the special characteristics of Collector Celvanayakam in *Malarvili*. Born in a poor family and educated with the financial help of many of his well-wishers he shoots into eminence by his perseverance, straight-forwardness and upright character. He is always conscious of his younger days, his poverty and his struggle to complete his education So he is always helpful to those who need his help, especially poor students who cannot afford their school and college fees. Before he becomes a Collector, he serves in Pachaiyappa's College, Madras. Naturally he develops a strong liking for Tamil language and literature. *Tirukkural* is more or less his Bible. He has a strong fascination for Cankam classics and devotional literature like *Tevaram* and Tayumanavar's hymns. Rabindranath Tagore and Tolstoy are his favourite authors.

Celvanayakam is a strict officer, very straightforward in his dealings. He does not expect anything from those persons whom he has to deal with. He is a great intellectual. He uses to deliver lectures in many institutions and organisations. His only motto is to dispel the ignorance of the masses. His noble ambition is that he should spread the greatness and the

glory of Tamil literature in all perts of the world. As he is pure in thought word and deed, he is adored by one and all. Many critics think that Celvanayakam resembles the novelist himself in certain aspects. "His (Celvanayakam's) passage from a lectureship at Pachaiyappa's college to the department of Revenue as an officer is a reversal of Mu. Va's own experience, first as a clerk and then as a Professor of Tamil. Celvanayakam's Tamil scholarship, his love of particular Tamil works as *Cilappatikaram* and *Pennin Perumai* and his devotion to Tamil Mystics like Tayumanavar and Ramalinkar are some more points of resemblance between the character and its creator, though the fictional and the real can never be equated"[10].

Though Celvanayakam is a great intellectual and an able administrator in the District, he fails to lead a successful family life. Though he is a scholar and a reformist in outlook he fails to understand the intricacies of the outside world. He has read a lot that hard work should be respected and rewarded. He dreams of such a country (a sort of utopia) but forgets the practical world where the conditions are quite the opposite. He leads a life disregarding the power of money. He is not a person who will cut the coat according to the cloth. On poor people he spends enormous sums disproportionate to his income. So confusion arises in the family. His wife Kancanai realises the financial difficulty of the family which is revealed by her remarks: "This man (Celvanayakam) spends lavishly much beyond his means. He shows sympathy to all as if he is their only saviour. He does not realise that charity should begin at home. This state of affairs often leads me to think that some business should be started in order to meet the deficits of thc family".[11] Therefore Kancanai starts a business with the help of Nakanatan, a poor boy supported by Celvanayakam. This project brings more worry to the family. Kancanai realises the importance of money-power whereas Celvanayakam does not respect it Therefore Kancanai tries to fulfil her aim making use of Nakanatan. The family very soon meets with ruin. Celvanayakam is steeped in debts. He does not know the family income and how it is being spent. When he dies

there is a debt of fifteen thousand rupees which is cleared with his insurance money.

The strong reason for the ruin of his family is that he had given unlimited freedom to his wife. But he does not realise it. He has a strong conviction that one should give full freedom to one's wife. We are lead to know his conviction from his advice to Muttayyan (narrator of the story).

> "My dear boy, give freedom to your wife. Don't mind even if you are involved in difficulties; even if three or four families are ruined one need not worry over that. Tamil Nadu will see a good future on account of this. Look at the Western countries. They are advanced in everything because of the freedom which the family enjoys ...... as long as rudeness and physical strength last, women will only be slaves. The sooner the women get their freedom the more lasting is our love and enlightenment".[12]

We observe that this unlimited freedom is what spoils Kancanai. Freedom within limits might have done good to her. He might have admonished Kancanai for her freely going out with Nakanatan before his (Nakanatan's) marriage with Malarvili. But after marriage he should not have permitted Kancanai to go to pictures, shopping and short trips to outside places with Nakanatan leaving Malarvili alone in the house. This omission on his part is responsible for a lot of trouble. This is implied in Mani's remarks also.

> "As far as he (Celvanayakam) is concerned he is good, but not clever. Had he been clever he would not have allowed himself to be spoiled and at the same time spoiling the life of the young girl Malarvili"[13]

There is another important reason for the ruin of Celvanayakam's family-life. As the Headmaster Malaikkannar points out, Celvanayakam had been addicted to certain bad habits in his younger days. He had been lustful and had visited some brothels. Malaikkannar remarks that Celvanayakam

might have been impotent and that might be the reason for his wife's going astray.

One may think that Celvanayakam could have divorced his wife and avoided many troubles. But there are two reasons for his failure to take initiative like this. One is that he is a man who gives credit to social prestige, whatever may be his views on social reforms.[14] That is why he is unsteady in social life. Secondly, he is grateful to his wife for all her services, and so he readily forgives all her wrongs. To put it in a nutshell Celvanayakam is a good person but one who is impractical.

6. Muniyamma

Muniyamma the heroine of *Perramanam* is contemptuously dubbed by society as a wife of a labourer, a mad-woman, a begger-woman, a child-lifter, a cook, a murderer, a criminal and a servant. But one notices that her motherly feeling does not disappear from her pure heart; in fact this fine sentiment makes her life complete and meaningful. The novelist remarkably portrays the servant maid and states that her stomach is not only a place for cold rice and gruel but also the seat of high culture and motherly affection.

Muniyamma's wedded life with Kantacami is one of simplicity, acute poverty, and an uncivilized nature. One finds it difficult to understand how they had imbibed the qualities of high culture. It may perhaps be due to the reason that they live a life of true mutual affection and like orphans for many years. Theirs is a harmonious happy life; for this Muniyamma seems to be its main spring. She does not think that gold ornaments and silk are the basic necessities of a happy life. She expects from her husband only his affection and love. Many misunderstanding and petty quarrel is averted by merely presenting a simple *pancupari*. There is scarcely any room for such petty quarrels in the life of a person who works like a bull and sleeps like a log. The great affection that Muniyamma has for her husband can be seen by this incident - many years after the demise of her husband,

somebody calls some other person by the name Kantacami. When she hears that name, Muniyamma receives a shock and countless thoughts haunt her mind. The utterance of that magic name by somebody simply melts her heart. It is difficult to gauge the intensity of affection in that poor innocent soul.

As a servant, Muniyamma never aspires for higher wages. Whatever is given she accepts it with gratitude. Whatever she undertakes, she does it with utmost efficiency. She never utters lies. But she suffers a lot by speaking the truth on many occassions. Straightforwardness is her dominant feature. Even though she is devoid of a mat for her bed, a little gruel to appease her hunger and a permanent small abode to lodge in, Muniyamma's ambition is to lead a life of honour by dint of her hard work. This aim is revealed in her admonition to her son Muttan whom she saw begging in the streets.

> "Mutta, come here. Hereafter don't ask anybody to give you a *paisa*; I will kill you . don't you know that you are endowed with hands and legs? Is it proper to take to begging? You have brought a very bad name to our family. Are we beggars? Are we to take to begging? Is it proper?"[15]

The novelist portrays motherliness as a predominant character in Muniyamma. Far and near seem to be one and the same to Muniyamma who has lost her second child. It is her firm conviction that her son must be in some unknown place. She feels that it is her duty to search for him and face all the difficulties on her way with fortitude and pleasure. She observes closely all the children she comes across on her way whether they bear any marks of her child. Seeing her queer nature, many dub her contemptuously as a child-lifter and mad woman. But Muniyamma does not mind these indignities. When a lady at Salem asks her how she could find her child in that big town, she quickly replies that the bigness of the town does not bother her but she will search for her child house after house until her death.[16] This

reply of Muniyamma reveals the degree of the affection she has for her child.

Muniyamma's life at Vacantapuram when she accepts the position of a servant maid in the house of Tevatacar is the most trying and difficult. She accepts that position with the only aim of merely existing with her son Muttan within that meagre income and at the same time, continuing the thorough search for her missing child. Though she is straight-forward and honest, the society around her does not permit her to lead a calm and quiet life. 'Evidences' are fabricated and she is involved in the murder of Cakacampal, the concubine of Tevatacar and is sentenced for fifteen years imprisonment. The innocent soul, though placed in prison with murderers and dacoits puts up with her mental agony with stoic patience and fortitude. But she cannot bear the separation of her son Muttan. She even thinks that life would be a bit more bearable if her son Muttan also was involved in the murder case and meted out punishment so that he too will be in the prison along with her.

There is a vast change in Muniyamma's appearance when she is released after undergoing the imprisonment. Her grey hair shows her old age. She is both mentally and physically tired and exhausted and there is complete change in her once well-built body. But her motherly feeling is so strong that she is never tired of her strenuous search. She thinks that one day or the other she would find her child Muttan.

When she returns to Vellore as an orphan her fate drives her to become a servant maid in the house where her second son Manivannan is living. Fortunately she identifies her son. But Manivannan treats her only as a servant. She hesitates to reveal her identity to her son whom she has been anxious to see all these years. Because she is afraid that he too would have to undergo all the difficulties and poverty she does not claim him as her son. Muniyamma desires that at least Manivannan should live in affluent circumstances. With these intentions she represses her overwhelming motherliness with the greatest difficulty.

This motherly feeling is the *sine qua non* for the continued existence of the world. There is nothing equal in the whole world to this sentiment. The novelist succeeds again in his creation of a character with such a feeling in abundance, by portraying it beautifully in all its aspects.

7. Alli

It is highly superstitious to think that any man and woman could lead a happy wedded life. Mental harmony alone is not sufficient for a happy life. In addition to their tastes, temperaments and attitudes physical compatibility is one of the factors responsible for domestic happiness. Alli, a medical student at Madras, marries an Engineer, Cuppuratinam. She considers ethical principles and integrity of character as precious as her life. This sort of conviction makes her emerge as a woman of fine character even though she studies in a Medical College which is supposed to be a bed of vices concealed under the cover of civilization. She considers simplicity and intellectual progress as the essential requisites of one's life. Further it is her firm conviction that one should live according to certain principles and codes of conduct.

No doubt these principles and aims produce a salutary effect in one's life. But complications arise only when one imposes these principles on others and expects others to strictly follow these principles in their lives. Alli expects that her husband also should follow her principles and thus she becomes very much disappointed when she finds him a different man. Her ethical arrogance, which involves her in a mental conflict is embodied in her own statement:

> "Behold! There, a sparrow bathes in the dirty water of a gutter. It spreads its wings and splashes water on its body. It does not care whether the water is dirty or the place is a gutter. The same sparrow will bathe with joy even in the spring water of *Palaru*. So is the behaviour of the crow; it will also be the in pools and lakes. But can a swan afford to do so? It will fly and fly endlessly till a lotus pond comes to its sight".[17]

From this statement of Alli it is explicit that she compares herself to a swan and other women to crows and sparrows.

It is rather a serious blunder on the part of Alli who behaves as a puritan, to have blindly given her consent for her marriage. Alli is not an illiterate and uncivilized woman. Nevertheless she agrees to marry Cuppurattinam without understanding or examining his qualities, attitudes, habits and customs. She confesses that because of her modesty she could not do so. She might have felt shy of asking her father about the nature of Cuppurattinam. But she might have freely expressed her expectations to the old lady in the neighbourhood with whom she is very friendly. Her omission in this regard is not excusable.

It appears to us that as far as her marriage is concerned she is frigid and cold. She thinks much about the marital life and looks at it without any confidence. Some of her statements expose her antagonistic attitude to marriage,

> "Why marriage? Why not a woman lead a soiitary life till her death?"[18]

> "Is it compulsory for a woman to marry? Is it not possible for a few among women to live as spinsters just as a few among men continue to be bachelors?"[19]

> "I have not at any time expressed my unwillingness about marriage. But it appears to me that I should express my unwillingness as the date of my marriage draws nearer and nearer"[20].

The above statements prove that she is confused about her wedded life and that she has no faith in it. In one context she says that she has learnt from a drama or a cinema that a lady's eyes are eager to see her lover, her ears are anxious to hear his words and her hands are ready to embrace him. But she confesses that she has not had such an experience when she thinks of her husband. Alli states this just on the eve of her going to her husband's house after her marriage-a statement

which is unbecoming of a newly wedded lady. We know that from the beginning Alli had no liking for wedded life. It was her preconceived notion that a wedded life will not be happy at all as it entails untold difficulties, worries and anxieties.

It is not a great disappointment to Alli who enters the house of Cuppurattinam with such a frame of mind. As expected, Cuppurattinam appears a drunkard, and debauchee. He is a person who is always enamoured of beauty and wants to lead a life of pomp and splendour. He lives according to his whims and fancies. He expects that his wife should imbibe the life of western civilization. This attitude makes Alli who is already prejudiced about wedded life detest it still further. Even Cuppurattinam did not expect Alli to co-operate with his intentions and desires. In the beginning we are given to understand from the statement of Alli that he is kind towards her.[21] But we notice the same bad habits in him even after marriage. Even though she tolerates these habits she hates him. This hatred increses day by day. Alli never thinks that she should live with him in spite of all his bad habits. But her line of thinking is in the opposite direction as we see in her statements made in different contexts :

"I have no business to go to Ataiyaru (to her husband's house). I do not know whether I should lead the wedded life there[22]".

"My father's good intention is that I should live amicably with my husband. It has become impossible for his good intention to be fulfilled. I am not going to worry for that......After coming here every scene I came across and every incident that has taken place drive me to frustration and a strong detarmination that I should give him up once for all[23]".

"I was in a happy and free mood because I have freed myself from the anxiety and worry I have suffered from, owing to my husband's reckless life. The spirit of independence reigned supreme in my heart the day on which I opposed him tooth and nail. My mind

> underwent an agonising experience about the loss of my jewels and the misuse of the car given by my father. Anyhow there is an end to the unfortunate state of my affairs. The thought that I am free from all the worries gave me a spirit of independence[24]".

These statements made by Alli in a way reveal to us her attitude to her wedded life. We notice in Alli who leaves her husband's house once for all the same spirit of freedom which a young lass enjoys when she leaves in the evening her school wherein she was 'cribbed, cabined and confined'.

When Comu the elder brother of Alli is undergoing treatment in the hospital and after his death there, Alli does not think of her husband for a long time. She even confesses that she has no time to think about her husband or his whereabouts. One may even presume that her gross indifference to her husband has even given him freedom to lead a licentious life. Any responsible wife who is already in the know of things about her husband's evil ways will not be so careless as to silently observe his activities and do nothing to put an end to them.

There is another reason for the failure of their relationship. Cuppurattinam always hates Aravali and has very poor opinion about his family life. But Alli who has cordial relations with such a good gentleman is not intelligent enough to foresee that her association with Aravali would spoil her intimacy with her husband. When she lives in her father's house after deserting her husband, Alli's association with Aravali grows stronger. Even though it is not wrong, she never considers for a moment that it will lead her husband to misunderstand her.

Further, after a long time Alli happens to meet her husband but in her own way ignores him. Even though she happens to meet him many times, she does not like to renew their association. According to her, symptoms of cares and anxieties were perceptible in her husband's face; his physical condition was not good; in the matter of his dress he was not

showy as he once was and even in his very look there was neither anger nor hatred. But this did not evoke sympathy in Alli's mind. In this context we are led to think that Cuppurattinam would have mended his ways if Alli had gone there and tried to live with him.

It is the irony of fate that Alli, who had boasted that she was a swan and other girls were crows and sparrows should fall in love with Aravali in her middle age. This love is only one-sided. This is a blot in the character of Alli who gives first place for her ideals and principles in life. If such a lady deviates from her virtuous path, she might as well have pardoned the evil ways of her husband who has no ideals or principles and led a happy wedded life. We may even presume that Cuppurattinam also could have changed his ways. But it is unfortunate that Alli was not inclined to adopt this path.

In conclusion, one may sympathise with Alli. Being a clever and educated lady she might have studied the basis on which her husband had gone astray and tried to reform him. But she did not do so. Instead, by her slanderous utterances about her husband and abusing him in her own way she spoils her wedded life. She desires to lead a solitary life of independence rather than a wedded harmonious happy life with her husband where an attitude of give and take is necessary. The factors responsible for such an attitude were her higher education and the pride of her profession. In spite of all these flaws, we see Alli as a dutiful and devoted doctor both to the haves and have-nots. She never considers her profession as a business. She is sympathetic with her patients. Above all, her sincerity and devotion in her service to humanity make us forget all her blunders.

8. Mokan

In the opening parts of the novel *Karit-tuntu* we see the artist Mokan looking at the ground with some coins of money in his left hand and a piece of charcoal in his right. The novelist presents him as the very embodiment of poverty. He is

arrogant by nature like most artists. We feel glad to see him showing equal approbation both to a person who throws a copper coin and to a person who throws a silver coin in appreciation of his art and in Sympathy with his poverty.

A reader of *Karit-tuntu* will witness two phases in Mokan's life; one at the peak of his affluence and the other the depth of his poverty. During one stage he lives at Calcutta in a beautiful spacious apartment of a multi-storied building with his beautiful wife, Nirmala and leads a life of ease, luxury and pleasure, because he gets hundreds of rupees as his monthly income by way of producing beautiful multi-coloured portraits. During the other phase he lives at Madras in a small hut in acute poverty with his second wife Ponni. He gets an income of three or four rupees a day by way of alms by drawing charcoal pictures on the pavements as well as on the sides of a tar road. He leads a life of simplicity living on gruel and pickles, sleeping on the ground without even a mat or pillow. Mokan at Calcutta looks like a Bengal but the same Mokan at Madras becomes a Tamilian.

Throughout the story Mokan appears as an astist. When he is at Calcutta leading a life of luxury with Nirmala he becomes mad after art. He uses his family as a spring board to move in the world of artists with ease and pleasure. He neglects his family completely. He has no specific aim in life. love and lust seem to be his main pre-occupations. He uses Nirmala for his purpose.

But the Tamil Mokan at Madras is totally a different person. His association with Ponni makes him realise the basic principles of life. He comes to a conclusion that art is a dangerous weapon which destroys the life of many and helps only a few. Affluent people may practise it as a hobby. As for others, it only lands them in trouble. He now says that art brings only anxiety and worry. In his own words, '*Kalai Kavalaitan*'.[25] When he lives with Ponni, he appears to us a rationalist who has understood the beginning and the end of an art and also the relationship between art and life. His life of beauty, ease and luxury is now changed. He lives

with Ponni with love and affection and proves himself an ideal husband to her. Says Ponni: "I am happy and contented only after I have beome his wife...... If there is no share (of food) for me he won't eat. His love and affectiontare peculiar. If I have not had the affection of this man I would have been dead long ago after throwing this boy (the child through her previous husband) into some well".[26] But Mokan's life with Nirmala was not smooth as he himself admits that he was not an ideal husband to her. In one context he says: "There were faults in me also. I do not deny them. I had no inclination to shoulder any responsibility; unfortunately I lack that ability".[27] And in another context he further states: "I am not without faults. I used to move with the world of artists using my family as a ladder"[28]

In short, when Mokan lived with Nirmala he lived for the sake of art. Nirmala served as a suitable instrument for him. She lived for vanity and for snobbishness and she used Mokan as a suitable instrument for her purpose. Thus both of them used their family as a ladder for their own purposses but they travelled in different directions. The cumulative effect was that both of them met with utter failure. But Mokan's life with Ponni is completely different. Here their family life is the be-all and the end-all of their ambition. Everything served as a ladder for the uplift of their family life. The poor income derived by his charcoal and chalk-piece art is used only for the welfare of the family. Mokan and Ponni complement each other. For both of them, family life becomes one of great happiness and a heaven on earth.

9. Anavar

Anavar, the hero of the novel *Kayamai* deserves our consideration The very name suggests the core of his characteristics in general. Perhaps the author himself purposely gives this name. Students of Caiva Cittanta Philosophy know the role of *anava-mala* when it attaches itself to the soul. This mala according to them obscures the soul and

causes rebirths. It is the primary cause of sin, all the wicked deeds and all other allurements of the material things and finally the cause of everything that is not godly. What *anava-mala* does for the soul, our Anavar does to the society and the people who surround him.

At the very outset the author portrays his external appearance. He is a man of brown complexion with a dark thickly coloured moustache He is a Bachelor of Arts; but that culture derived from the university education does not appear either in his cruel face or in his well built body. Rudeness is a dominant feature in his voice as well as in his look. Those who happen to come across him first wlll easily form an opinion that he is only an illiterate brute who has by hook or by crook amassed wealth. His very appearance reminds us of the appearance of a proprietor of a road-side military hotel. Perhaps the author wants to create such an impression in the minds of the readers. The very talk with his subordinates and the rude and angry words he utters and his immoral talk, disclose to us that he is not a cultured person, but a boor.

In his family life also his rude nature is evident. when his children make noise in their petty play, he threatens them and uses abusive and vulgar terms which are quite unbecoming of a father who is a degree holder. His children catch hold of these expressions and naturally employ them in their own way without understanding the meaning of these terms.

Anavar's philosophy of life seems to be one full of wickedness, rudeness and rowdyism. His thought, word and deed proclaim such a philosophy. In fact he advocates such a philosophy. He is of a firm conviction that rudeness and wickedness only will pay one in life When once his wife remarks that his rudeness has infected his children he immediately reveals his real philosophy as follows:

> "One can thrive only by rudeness in these days. Bear it in mind. If not, one can live in a corner of one's house as a hare lives in a pit".[29]

These words addressed by him to his wife emphasise that one can prosper only by rudeness. One can know his philosophy of life again from what he says to his friend Kanakalinkam.

> "My dear friend, if one follows the same principle in life one will surely perish. There will be changes of Ministry; there will be change of Government; there will be changes in the officers due to transfers; because of this there will be automatically change in the local conditions also".[30]

From these remarks one understands what Anavar is. It is clear that Anavar is an opportunist.

Though wicked and rude, Anavar's intellect is very sharp in evil doings. He is a man of the world and he knows how to adjust himself to an environment. He knows how to conduct himself in strange situations and how to adapt himself to the whims and fancies of his superior officers. His conduct before the new officer Kiritaracami may be cited as an instance. Before Kiritaracami assumes charge in his office Anavar learns through self-appointed spies about the real nature of the new officer - that he is a man of devotion who goes to temple on Fridays and Saturdays for worship and that he is fond of the external paraphernalia of ritual. From the day on which his officer takes charge Anavar changes his hair style, daubs his fore-head prominently with sacred ash and pretends to be a true devotee of Siva. The new officer forms a good opinion of Anavar. To strengthen the officer's good opinion Anavar sends a file to obtain the officer's signature wherein he inserts a small book *'kantar sasti kavacam'*. The officer thinks that the head-clerk Anavar is really a devotee of Lord Cupramanian

By nature Anavar is a bundle of all these bad qualities and is an immoral fellow. His immoral relationship with the lady clerk Vaceekaram and his bad treatment of other clerks, simply to satisfy her, his attempt to use another lady clerk Menmoli to satisfy his lust and similar atrocities amply prove

his wickedness. Another instance of his licentiousness is his immoral relationship with the concubine of his intimate friend, Kanakalinkam.

It is a matter of common knowledge that everybody has one weakness or the other. Anavar who has great deal of worldly wisdom to his credit can exploit any person once he finds out his weaknesses. He has understood some weakness of his officer and his wife. When the officer falls ill he supplies '*pracatams*' of Tirupati and '*sacred ashes*' from Tiruttani temples as if he had gone to those temples to offer prayers to the respective Lords for the speedy recovery of the officer. In fact, he spends those 'three days' in the house of Kanakalinkam's concubine.

Even though Anavar is a man of strong views, he is out and out a man of superstition. He wants to attend the birth day celebration of Cuntara Vinayakar, a member of the Legislative Assembly. Early in the morning as he opens the gate to go out, a cat crosses him. Murmuring words of irritation, he returns to his chair. After sometime he comes out, and again he happens to see an old widow coming from the opposite direction. So he returns to his seat. The third time when he attempts to go out, his leg slips and he almost falls down. So his wife requests him to sit for a while before going out. Somehow Anavar does not miss that birth day function. Perhaps the author wants to expose the weaknesses of Anavar who represents the official class.

Even in a rude and wicked Anavar one can notice cowardice. The agonising experience which he undergoes after committing the murder of the lady clerk Vaceekaram and his great fear when he faces a police enquiry, which makes him not to stir out of his house, illustrate his cowardice.

With all these, the novelist sympathises with Anavar and makes us understand that he is not the only person who is responsible for all his wickedness, corruption and other evils. The novelist thinks that the society is in a way responsible for all his crimes. He makes Venkatecan his mouth-

piece to express his personal views. When there is some discussion about Anavar's role in the office among Venkatecan, Nallayyan, Prakasam and others, Venkatecan remarks:

> "This is a money-hunting society. People aspire for money and they want to amass it by fair or foul means. They have not an atom of respect for culture. They have no faith in hard work. They are not satisfied with what they get by their honest work. They want to amass wealth through short-cuts. The desire for wealth has grown to such an extent that people believe that God also will bestow His favour on them if they perform *archanas* and other forms of worship. So it is a common thing that people offer money to officers for unlawful gratification and officers are tempted to accept such money. So corruption has become the order of the day and corrupt officers have become very common in all offices. Anavar is one such officer and there is no use of heaping blame on him.[31]

Perhaps it is the author's view that Anavar is not solely responsible for being a knave and a wicked person; the society also is partly responsible for moulding such men as Anavar.

10. Vativu

Man, in the twentieth century which is the busiest period in history, is subjected not only to external forces but also inner conflicts. Edmund Fuller has rightly observed: "Our time has described variously as an age of anxiety, an age of schism in the soul, a time when man suffers not only from war, persecution, famine and ruin but from inner problems fully as terrible: despair, a conviction of isolation, randomness, meaninglessness in his very existence."[32] When we meet Vativu, the heroine of *Nencil Oru Mul*, she suffers from such inner conflicts. She is twenty-eight and a Bachelor of Arts. But her comely appearance makes her look younger. She belongs to a middle class family. The inner conflicts of Vativu become the core of the novel from beginning to end. Vativu fails in love with Palaraman, one of her classmates. After

the college education Palaraman forgets her, but Vativu retains the pleasant memories which continue to torment her. So for a change she accepts the job of an assistant to one rich lady Vijaya, and thus spends her time. After sometime she marries the widoer Akor who is a family friend of Vijaya. But the marriage in the initial days appears to be a failure. Her inner conflict disappears but her family struggle (external conflict) starts. She discovers that Akor is a drunkard, and a debauchee. Her mental agony knows no bounds. She tries to reform him by pointing out his evil ways first in a mild manner and later vehemently. But all her protests and pleadings are of no avail. She leaves the house and goes to her mother. On her way she happens to meet Palaraman, her old college friend. Driven by old memories and urged by a longing to be relieved of the feeling of neglect, she becomes enamoured of him and he readily responds to her tender feelings. The long gap of eight years is forgotten and they feel as though they were never separated. But later her infidelity starts pricking her mind and she is disgusted with and pained by the very recollection of this incident. She soon finds herself in a family way and gives birth to a son who resembles neither his legal father nor his mother. The casual remarks of the dear and near on seeing this child begin to prick her guilty conscience. Fortunately after this incident there is an appreciable change in her family life. The family struggle ends and her hatred for her husband slowly disappears. She becomes a completely changed person :

> "Hereafter I will adjust myself to the ways of my husband. If necessary, I will drink with him. I am born to be his wife. I will try to reform him. If this is not possible I will pull on with him in his own way and die with him. If he takes bath I will do the same. If he falls into the ditch I will follow suit."[33]

With this resolution Vativu makes up her mind to live with her husband according to his whims and fancies.

When she is a chaste woman, arrogance and obstinacy seem to be the dominant characteristics in her. As a changed

person after committing that mistake she becomes a modest lady with an attitude of give and take. Her mistake nullifies her arrogance and produces a mellowing effect. Her guilty-conscience produces a salutary effect in her. So she begins to love her husband more than ever and by her changed attitude her family life becomes happy.

When her son Kannalakan attains the age of adolescence she has to face a new struggle. Kannalakan falls in love with Anparaci the daughter of Palaraman her old paramour. Without knowing Anparaci's parentage Vativu encourages her son in this respect. When she comes to know that Anparaci is the daughter of Palaraman, she is greatly shocked and asks her son to forget Anparaci. But the relationship between Kannalakan and Anparaci has grown so deep that they cannot change their decision and Vativu is not able to disclose the reason for her disapproval of this alliance. Caught between these emotions and her helplessness to prevent the obvious horror, she suffers from indescribable torture.

Vativu is soft hearted by nature and she is capable of sane and refined thoughts. That is why she regrets her mistakes. We are reminded of Aravali's statement:

> "In worldly life some tread on the right path with open-eyes so that no thorn pricks their feet. They are mentally alert. Some others learn to walk with mental alertness only after having a bitter experience of their feet being pricked by thorns. But there are still some who are habituated to walk in rough and rugged path and lose their sensitivity and develop a sort of numbness Such people are protected by the world".[34]

Vativu belongs to the second category. Till the thorn is removed she undergoes that agonising experience. After expressing the mistake of her past life to Aravali (of course indirectly) she feels as if she has got rid of the hidden burden of her heart. Now the thorn in Vativu's heart is completely removed. In conclusion, we see that Vativu is a chastened woman with some principles. That is why she

undergoes many trials and tribulations in her mind. If she had made up her mind to lead a life like Kintira the daughter of Vijaya (which is dealt with elsewhere in this thesis) she would not have met with so many difficulties. Vativu belongs to the group of persons who live on certain ideals. Therefore she faces innumerable, unendurable and never-ending inner conflicts. Perhaps the author wants to show the readers that there are still certain women like Vativu in this world.

11. Cantiran

Among the major characters of Mu. Va, Cantiran in *Akal-Vilakku* attracts our attention. Being the son of a rich land-lord he is hale and healthy and his face is very bright. At the outset we meet him as a handsome young school boy with a sharp intellect. His teachers and even the Inspector of Schools praise his handsomeness and intelligence. Even the poor old lady-fruit-vendor is attracted by his personality. But in spite of these, Cantiran does not become haughty or arrogant. Velayyan, his close friend and class-mate, is in no way comparable to him. But Cantiran does not show any feeling of superiority and treats Velayyan as his equal in all respects. The way in which Cantiran moves in close quarters even when Velayyan suffered from itches and the readiness with which he is prepared to change his optional Mathematics to Optionel History for the sake of Velayyan bears ample testimony of Cantiran's affection towards Velayyan. This friendship is intimate as long as they study in school.

During their college life, there is a glaring change in Cantiran's character and behaviour. His sharp intellect seems to lose its keenness This begins to appear even at the end of his school career. About the change in his behaviour and his declining interest in his studies and his undesirable conduct, we come to know from the remarks of his aunt[35] and from the conversation between an old couple of the village of Perunkanci.[36] His intimacy with Velayyan decreases in due course even though they are in the same hostel. Cantiran cuts himself away from his good friends. His interest in studies declines gradually and he takes interest in music and drama.

UG 3734

Very soon he becomes a very good actor. So, he becomes friendly with various types of students in the college. It is in this context Imavati his class-mate and he become friends. He misunderstands the free sociability of Imavati and thinks that she has fallen in love with him. He becomes so obsessed with sex that he cherishes bad intentions about all the women with whom he comes into contact.

His impetuosity and rash behaviour are visible in every incident in which he involves himself; the scene in which the kite of Velayyan gets entangled in a tree and[37] his petty quarrel over the silly incident of not pouring water in the urinals in the hostel[38] and his thoughtless decision of discontinuing abruptly his college education as soon as he hears the news of Imavati's marriage can be cited as examples. Even the remarks of his sister Karpakam, his aunt and his friend Velayyan on many occasions throw light on this quality of Cantiran

One may think that Imavati's unreserved behaviour with Cantiran and Pakkiam Ammaiyar's exuberant affection for him may be the reasons for his turning into a rake. His association with one Tayammal in Nilgris worsens his condition. Without thinking of the serious consequences he falls a willing prey to her enticing charms. We do not find any appreciable change even after his marriage. The arrogant, insulting and inconsiderate manner in which he treats his wife makes any domestic harmony impossible. In his native village he does not spare any poor girl. The last days of Cantiran are awfully miserable. He contacts leprosy which is the effect of his excessive indulgence in romantic exploits and comes under the care and custody of his erstwhile friend Velayyan and dies a miserable death after losing his health, wealth, honour and everything. His tragic death evokes our pity and sympathy.

The following statement of Cantiran in his last days explains the two stages in his life :

Cantiran states to Velayyan :

"When you were earthen lamp I was a brass lamp. For some time it glittered. All people liked my handsomeness and intelligence; even they appreciated them. For what use! Day by day the oil was exhausted; the wick was spoiled; the brass lamp was covered by verdigris. The light became dim. I became insignificant. You are now a bright lamp burning with brilliance and with tranquillity."[39] The two stages in his life are the pre-adolescent stage and the post-adolescent stage. In the first stage Cantiran is handsome and intelligent and everybody is attracted by him. But the Cantiran of the second stage is a person with lustful feelings, unconlrollable sex-drives and almost a slave to those feelings. His hastiness and lustful feelings almost shatter his life. The following statements always ring in our minds embodying Cantiran's basic nature which was responsible for his doom.

Cantiran speaks to Velayyan : "Velu, one thing strikes my mind. From my younger days I was always impelled by lustful feelings. Will there not be many like me?"[40]

Warning of an unknown cyclist : "You fellow, don't be hasty like this. Hastiness will spoil you and people who are related to you."[41]

An unidentifiable voice : "Don't you know that one should be controlled by certain principles even though it happens to be a play. You cannot play at your sweet will and pleasure as if you are a king. Please understand"[42]

12. Tanappan

Next, Tanappan in *Vatamalar* comes to attract our consideration. When some men are ignored, discarded or duped at their young age they degenerate into wicked people. Their starving and hunger in the early days, anxiety about the future, disappointment resulting from the desertion by those on whom they had depended all these spoil their plastic minds and they become hard-hearted and very wicked. Tanappan is

one of these. The author presents him as a handsome young lad with sharp intellect at the beginning of the story. After his mother's death he is placed under the tutelage of his step-mother under whom he faces all ramifications of cruelty. In fact, he becomes a Cinderella at her hands. He bears his afflictions and persecutions with patience for some time but once when he is denied food he disappears from the house and runs away to Madras where he seeks a job in a hotel and appeases his hunger.

The proprietor of the hotel is shrewd enough to understand his sharp intellect and his power of executing any kind of work. He uses him for manufacturing arrack out of spirit. This was against the policy of the State. So he is caught by the police and after enquiry, convicted and imprisoned. After eighteen months he is acquitted and he seeks the refuge of his former master who ignores him without any consideration. This disappointment produces in him a metamorphosis and he becomes a completely changed person. He understands that the world is wicked and all people are wicked and no one can survive unless one adapts oneself to this [43]

When he is at Madras the news of his father's demise reaches him. He rushes to his native place, takes possession of his father's jewellery-shop and he drives away his step-mother from the house. He becomes a rich and influential person in the locality. In spite of his friend Kulantaivelu's dissuasion he contests the Municipal elections and comes out successful. With his newly acquired wealth by way of patrimony and the new influence in winning the civic election he opens a big hotel, involves himself in the trade of arrack production which he learnt from the hotel proprietor at Madras and amasses wealth. With the same speed he precipitates his marriage also. Unfortunately his wife is an undesirable type and of questionable character. She poisons her husband and herself and both of them meet a tragic death.

No doubt Tanappan has studied the world well. He has also learnt about the intricacies of the world. He is good by nature but he is badly shaped by the society as stated by

his brother-in-law Murukayya. The disappointments he faces in his life and his unpleasant home atmosphere change him into a bad person.[44] The author makes us understand that Tanappan's failure in spite of his cleverness and learning the secret of accumulating wealth are due to the haste with which he transacted business without any second thoughts. He points out also in many places that whatever Tanappan does whether good or bad he does with undue and indecent haste and because of that he succumbs to the dire consequences and ultimately fails. The same idea is embodied in the remarks of a co-worker at the Madras hotel.[45]

One can note four important stages in Tanappan's life. First, Tanappan as a school boy naturally endowed with intelligence and ability; secondly, Tanappan who runs away to Madras for the sake of finding a job for him and when he learns the ways of the world; thirdly, Tanappan living in his native place as a rich and influential person enamoured of luxurious life; and fourthly, Tanappan who is completely changed after listening to the speech of Tiru Vi. Ka. Of the four stages the last two attract our attention. Though endowed with such good qualities as love, affection and truth Tanappan has completely changed into a wicked man because of his disappointments, poverty and because of the lack of motherly care in his younger age. As he had seen the various kinds of dupery, he has witnessed the various kinds of roles that money plays in the day-to-day life. He is mad after amassing wealth by any means, fair or foul, and becomes an influential person in the society.

> "Others cannot swallow me. I should be alert till I reach a stage when nobody can destroy me."[46]

> "I have no faith in the fair means. This is a world full of dupery and corruption. There is no respect for a fair means. Those who are prepared to live in utter poverty can only be firm on the righteous path. I am unable to do so. Certainly the world will dupe me. We can go near the hare or deer with handful of grass. What will be the use if we go near a tiger or a wolf

> without a bayonet and a gun? We should not be cheated in the wicked society by believing that all are hares and deers. This so-called civilized world is really a dangerous jungle."[47]

By these two statements of Tanappan we understand that he has clearly understood the world.

A complete metamorphosis is perceptible in the fourth stage of Tanappan's life. After listening to the speech of Tiru Vi. Ka his previous life gradually disappears like a waning moon. New good habits, cultured behaviour and amiable manners slowly begin to develop in him. Slowly, we perceive a rapid speed in the development. He becomes a dignified person, only conscious of his duties, unmindful of other considerations. Greed for money, ambition for position and madness for power all these are in the downward trend in him. And he becomes like an innocent child.

> "A child is like pure rain water which is free from dust and taint of the world. You and I after growing up have become metamorphosed like the rain water fallen on saltish and clayey soils. Some are spoiled like the rain drops fallen in dirty guttar. Pure and unalloyed minds are spoiled by bad environment, undesirable habits, superstitious beliefs and meaningless ceremonies... It is possible for the rain water that has fallen in the gutter to change itself into water vapour by the heat of the sun. This change of water into vapour is the real *Mukti* or salvation."[48]

This portion of talk of Tanappan to Kulantaivel shows him as a great philosopher.

In conclusion, one can estimate that Tanappan was a good and clever person. But the pity is that there is no co-ordination between his goodness and cleverness. When he was clever he was not good and when he was good he was not clever. The greatest blunder that he commits is in the choice of his wife whom he failed to assess at an opportune time which results in his utter failure in life.

13. Meyyappan

It is the irony of fate that some people who set themselves to help or extricate others from some trouble often involve themselves in difficulties. One such character is Meyyappan the hero of the novel *Man-kuticai*. Meyyappan a petty clerk in the Municipal office becomes an enemy of one Kecavarayan who is a rich and influential person in the town and at the same time a rogue and knave. The atrocities committed by Kecavarayan in the town know no bounds. By oppressing the poor and committing many unfair deeds in the town he has earned a lot and has become very rich. He treats the poor with contempt and cruelty. Meyyappan and his friends are unable to tolerate these atrocities of Kecavarayan and they decide to create a public opinion against him.

One day in the course of his evening walk he happens to see a rowdy, Kotantan, molesting a woman in a rivulet surrounded by sword-flower trees. He rushes to the spot and tries to save her. An encounter takes place between them in which the rogue falls on the ground. At that moment the woman drops a big stone on his head and runs away. The rogue with his fatal injury is admitted in the hospital where he dies. Meanwhile Meyyappan reports the matter to the police and divulges everything to them. Kecavarayan who was all along expecting an opportunity to put Meyyappan into trouble takes this situation as an advantage. He manoeuvres with the police by corrupting some of the constables and gets Mayyappan convicted for six years in a Magistrate court. After six years Meyyappan is released. His wife affords only a cold reception. Even his children are afraid to go near him. Meyyappan is not able to face this agonising experience. So he decides to leave his house and accompanies his friend Kumaravel and his wife who go on a tour of North India He thinks that his wife may change if he leaves her alone for some more time He joins a small industry in Delhi and sends some money to his home. Then he goes to Kashmir where he meets Meykantar and Prof. Narentirar, a Bengali. He lives there under the good influence of those gentlemen.

The reward received by Meyyappan for rescuing an innocent woman from being molested by the rogue Kotantan is only a conviction for six years. The author desires to point out that in some cases wicked people manoeuvre the police who concoct cases and make innocent people their victims. We also come across certain cases in the day-to-day affairs of the world. Poor Meyyappan who possesses good nature and a devotional bent of mind, reads and recites the hymns of Ramalinka Swamikal, Tayumana Atikal and Manikkavacakar but does not know the ways of the world. No doubt he is right in vindicating truth and justice for the sake of the poor and the down-trodden. He is also right in exposing the wickedness and knavery of such people as Kecavarayan. But the method he adopts seems to be wrong and is not conducive to the practical world. As Meykantar points out, there will be people both wicked and good, innocent and ignorant in towns and villages just as there are tigers and jackals, cows and deers in the forest. This is one of the wonders of God's creation. Meyyappan should have left the wicked people to God or to Government for punishment. He should not have taken the law into his own hands and involved himself in troubles. Meykantar points this out to Meyyappan:

> "There should be some change in your attitude to life. Don't be hasty to change the world completely at once. It is always good if one makes an honest attempt in that direction. You may consider it your duty also. But don't create enemies around you".[49]

The author perhaps hints to the reader that patience brings its own reward. Meyyappan could have managed to reform Kecavarayan but instead he makes him his enemy. After his release from jail he could have waited for sometime till proper rapport was established between him and his wife and children. On the other hand he hastily leaves his kith and kin.

Among the thirteen central characters in the novels six die at the end of the story. Among these, five can be considered tragic heroes. Of these, Cantiran elicits more sympathy from the readers. In Shakespearean tragic heroes,

one notices some defect or the other which Bradley terms as the 'tragic flaw' which is responsible for the hero's downfall. Cantiran in *Akal-Vilakku* meets his end due to his impatience and unusual lust. The end of Tanappan in *Vata-malar* may be attributed to his feverish haste. In Cantiran and Tanappan we observe both identical and unidentical characters. As Tanappan is not destined to enjoy the affection of his mother and suffers at the hands of his step-mother, it is but natural that he should turn a rogue. Though Cantiran is privileged to have the association of good men, his arrogance and lust bring him to a tragic end. In his life there are many opportunities which would have advanced his welfare and progress; but he does not utilise them effectively to his advantage. In Tanappan's early life we do not see any such chance being presented to him. In any event, it is Cantiran's end that creates a deeper impression in us. The reason for this strong appeal may be attributed to Cantiran's handsomeness, sharp intellect and the novelist's adroitness in the art of characterization and above all the way in which he picturesquely brings about the resolution of the story

The 'tragic flaw' which we notice in colletor Celvanayakam in *Malarvili*, is his lack of cleverness and worldly wisdom eventhough he is a man of fine character. Mankai's *(Kallo? Kaviyamo?)* 'tragic flaw', we can say, is her hasty decision to abandon her husband. Though Arumukam's (*Antanal*) sacrificing nature for the sake of others commands our appreciation, too much of altruism in him may be considered his 'tragic flaw' which brings about his end. Among these tragic characters Anavar in *Kayamai* is a person completely to be singled out from the other five. The tragic end of the five central figures evokes in us a sort of mental agony and a sentiment of sympathy. But Anavar's end does not produce any such effect. Our mind refuses to sympathise with him because he does not posses even an iota of goodness. He may be termed the 'hero villain' of the story as he is utterly devoid of any redeeming feature.

Among the other central characters two women command our attention by virtue of their being placed in identical

circumstances. They are Alli in *Alli* and Vativu in *Nencil Oru Mul*. Both of them are blessed the privilege of higher education and are graduates. Unfortunately their husbands are drunkards and womanisers. But Vativu's family life is successful and Alli's is an utter failure. Even though Vativu's husband leads a licentious life, Vativu thinks that it is her duty to bear with the evil ways of her husband and further considers that it is her responsibility to reform her husband and bring him back to normal life. It is this motherly feeling and, more, her sacrificing attitude that bring success to her domestic life. But Alli has a preconceived notion that her husband is incorrigible and any kind of reformation is impossible. Her spirit of indipendence, her ethical arrogance, and her strong confidence that she can lead a solitary life have all become disintegrating forces in her wedded life.

NOTES :

1. *Centamarat*, p. 81.
2. *Centamarai*, pp. 140–141.
3. *Hamlet*, Act I. Scence ii, line 146·
4. *Centamarai*, p. 55.
5. ibid. p.131.
6. *Kallo ?Kaviyamo ?* p.136.
7. *Pavai*, p. 107.
8. *Antanal*, pp. 44–45.
9. ibid. p. 38.
10. *Dr. Mu. Va.* (Collection of Research papers on Dr. Mu. Va.), p. 24.
11. *Malarvili*, p. 14.
12. ibid, pp.146–147.
13. ibid. p.225.
14. ibid. p.222.
15. *Perramanam* p.104.
16. ibid. p.108.
17. *Alli* p.35.
18. ibid. p.8.
19. ibid. p.16.
20. ibid. p.17.
21. ibid. p.54.
22. ibid. p.95.
23. ibid. p.112.
24. ibid. pp.147–148.
25. *Karit-tuntu*, p.80.
26. ibid. p.120.
27. ibid. p.195.
28. ibid. p.197.
29. *Kayamai*. p.32.
30. ibid. p.51.
31. ibid. p.217.
32. *Man in Modern Fiction* p.3.
33. *Nencil Oru Mul*, p,280.
34. ibid. p.547.
35. *Akal-vilakku*, p. 92.
36. ibid. p. 100.
37. ibid. pp. 28–29.
38. ibid. pp. 134–144.
39. ibid. pp. 397–398.
40. ibid. p. 389.
41. ibid. p. 406.
42. ibid. p. 406.
43. *Vatamalar*, p. 106.
44 ibid. pp. 219–220.
45. ibid. p. 160.

46. ibid. p. 207.
47. ibid. p. 158.
48. ibid. pp. 308–309.
49. *Mankuticai*, p.448.

CHAPTER IV

MINOR CHARACTERS — MEN

Even for a novelist of much repute it is not possible to communicate all his worldly experience and his way of looking at things from various angles and his powers of his creation of art by the plot of his novel alone, nor they can be revealed solely through the protagonists of his novels. The minor characters created by him also come in handy in fulfilling these aims. The reader can understand through these characters all the thoughts and feelings of the author, how he has studied the various types of people in day-to-day life, how he has visualized the innermost recesses of their hearts and how they have acquired experience in their various walks of life. Further, it is possible for us to understand how the novelist picturesquely delineates various problems which he encounters in his life time and how he finds solutions to these problems. Generally, it can be said that the microcosm of his minor characters ehanges itself into a real macrocosm. They are the characters who give real life and tempo to his art. If one classifies these characters on the basis of their traits or their professions or their relationships with each other or their age and studies them by the method of comparison and contrast, one can understand the artistic bent of the novelist and his vast knowledge of men and matters. I have set myself to the task of studying these characters on the lines mentioned above. The microcosm created by Mu. Va in his various novels presents to us diverse types of characters; we come across in his world good and bad people, the rich and the poor and the learned and the laity. His characters in the novels generally indicate the trend of life in twentieth century.

1. Youths

Among the characters created by Dr. Mu. Va. youths have won a permanent place in the minds of the readers.

Some of them have made an indelible impression on the minds of the readers even more than his major characters. The reason that we can attribute to this is that Mu. Va being a professor for many years had closely moved with the students and had many opportunities to come into contact with some of them rather intimately and had watched the problem-students at a distance. His profession gave him an opportunity to closely observe thousands of students in their day-to-day life. He had an immense scope to observe their emotions their tastes, temperaments, likes and dislikes and habits. In fact, being by nature a keen observer and an ideal teacher, he might have known the innermost recesses of their hearts. In his experience he might have come across handsome youths, intelligent youngmen and those who are at once handsome, intelligent, and emotional. He might have come accross certain handsome and intelligent youths, whose impetuosity must have been responsible for the ruin of their career. He himself had mentioned this in one place: "I am really sorry for that. What else could I do? However, I tried to reform Cantiran who has proved to be incorrigible. I could not help his being responsible for his ruin. It is a tragic end, an much to be regretted. In my profession as a teacher for many years I have come across many such fellows. Some of them possess intelligence but are devoid of any principles of ethics and confidence. They have ruined themselves and thus they stick to my memory. Some of them evoke my sympathy even to the extent of my shedding tears. Cantiran is a typical example of such young men".[1] Therefore it may be said that many of the youths ereated by Mu. Va are life-like because he has seen them in real life. There are many problems which the teen agers confront. These problems are the outcome of the sex drive. In order to sublimate that drive, king Solomon has advised the youths as follows: "Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth"[2] In the same vein King David has advised "wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his ways? By taking heed thereto Thy word".[3]

Indian youths unlike Western youths feel shy and even reluctant to express their mind to the elders. If there are any who muster courage to do so, they are contemptuously treated

as lascivious persons by the society. For this reason many youths indulge in inhibitions which lead to social problems. Many are the youths who have ruined their lives by their own inhibitions and internal struggles. Comu's diary *(Alli)* is no doubt the reflection of the minds of the youths who suffer from their inhibitions. While pondering over the pathetic or rather tragic condition of youths the novelist states:

> "Every youth should have an ideal in his life. He should have some avocation in his life; otherwise, his thoughts cannot be passive. His sensual passions and sex drives lead him to undesirable channels and spoil his good physique. If a youth of twenty or twenty five wants to be free from such desires he should have an ideal or a strong ambition which serves as a diversion. Youths who are devoid of any such ideal should resort to their marriage. In fact, their parents should make it a point that they are married at the earliest opportunity".[4]

Had Cantiran in *Akal-vilakku* cherished for himself any ideal, his life would have been in the right channel.

A few other youths, even though they do not have adequate knowledge and handsomeness, somehow manage to lead a simple and peaceful life and achieve proggress step by step. Their life is more or less akin to the gentle course of a river in the plains. Their life can also be compared to the life of a *tulaci* (basil) plant. This plant does not yield beautiful flowers. Still every part of it is useful to mankind. The flowers, the leaves, the stem and the root of the plant produce on the whole a kind of aroma. Similar is the life of such characters as Velayyan in *Akal-vilakku* and Kulantaivel in *Vata-malar*. Even though one cannot see perceptible handsomeness or intellectual trait in Velayyan one can perceive in him a calm simple and contented life. His inferiority complex has not done any harm to him as the superiority complex has done so in the case of Cantiran. Velayyan almost confesses that he has escaped from many dangers because of his being

shy and unsociable. He too commits blunders due to his sex drives. But he shows the redeeming feature of realising his mistakes. His brutal attitude to Karpakam, Cantiran's sister, when she has been to his house, can be cited as an example of his untoward conduct. When he learns that Karpakam's marriage has been fixed with Malan he undergoes a sort of mental anguish due to his disappointment caused by the loss of the alliance of Karpakam. But on that account he has not spoiled his career by taking a hasty decision like Cantiran. As he has a strong faith in God and in moral code, he has had many chances of escape from the clutches of strong emotional drives. He derives a lesson and a note of warning from the degraded life of Cantiran. "The most important conveyer of the theme and the most significant agent of plot is character. Almost all stories use representations of human beings to act out plot and express theme".[5] This statement of Henry James, the famous, critic and novelist, becomes true in the case of Velayyan. Mu.Va puts him to proper use in his novel to develop its theme. The popular saying that 'slow and steady wins the race' is applicable to the life of Velayyan. This characteristic feature supplies immense possibility and helps the novelist to develop the theme of the novel.

In the characterization of a novel the usual technique employed by the novelists is introducing an element of contrast Some novelists introduce this technique droitly in an artistic way. Speaking about this technique Maren Elwood states: "contrast, to the writer who masters its use, is a magic wand that he can wave over any character, major or minor, good or bad, sympathetic or unsympathetic and change him in any instant from a dull character into a living, individual one".[6] An instance of this technique is seen in *Vata-malar*. While introducing Tanappan and Kulantaivel to the readers the novelist states that the life of Kulantaivel is like the dim light of a country lamp in a corner house while the life of Tanappan is like a wild fire in a forest. The readers catch the spirit of the novelist that Kulantaivel's life is a calm and peaceful one whereas Tanappan's life is eventful.

Some of the youths created by Mu. Va seem to live for the sake of certain principles. Their life depends more or less on their thoughts only. Their life moves in a right groove whether they face poverty or affluence in their life. Nallayyan in *Kayamai* is a youngman of good qualities. He has a strong faith in truth. He therefore advocates the principles of Tayumanavar and Ramalinka-atikal who preached and practised truth. So he vehemently disapproves of things situations which are against the principle of righteousness. For example he exposes all the irregularities and atrocities of the Head-clerk Anavar to the officer. This action produces an adverse reaction which ruins his life. As Venkatecan says, Nallayyan dreams of reforming the world overnight and this accounts for his undergoing untold mental agonies and difficulties. He has not thought for a moment that in God's creation good and bad things coexist; he wants good things only to exist and this is not possible in a practical world. Nakappan in *Anta-nal* is a man of action. His life is an example of Tiruvalluvar's idea of munificence. "The loss of wealth incurred by doing kind acts to others", says Valluvar, 'is similar to trade by bartering because the wealth lost is sure to give in return the marit of moral satisfaction which is sure to yield great happiness in future".[7] Nakappan, knowing that he will be convicted to ten years of imprisonment, attacks the imperialistic policy of the Government when it has declared state of emergency.

> "War is a sort of dupery. It creates difficulties to the people and threatens them. That is why we consider it as the greatest sin. All the arrangements made for mobilising the army, all the training given for the sake of war and all other arrangements that have undertaken for it are unpardonable sins... .."[8]

This is how Nakappan makes a propaganda against the Government and courts imprisonment. Kannalakan and Tirumalai in *Nencil Oru Mul* study the works of greatmen like Tiru Vi. Ka and listen to the advice of Aravali and others and thus they get chastened. Muttan in *Perramanam* undergoes many difficulties in his younger days. Though he

is denied the affection of his mother during his younger days when Muniyamma has been in jail, he leads a disciplined life. Cantalinkam in *Akal-vilakku* is a young man who advocates Gandhian way of life. He not only professes Gandhian principles but also practises them in his own life. He holds that Gandhism is the only 'humanism'. Ilanko in *Centamarai* is a young and an intelligent graduate. He always sets his face rather boldly against all the ceremonies and conventions which, according to him, carry no meaning. He is a man of progressive views and rather boldly points out the ignorance of the people in many of their conventional ways of life. Tirunatan in the same novel studies the various systems of Vedanta philosophy and leads a moral life. Palani in *Pavai* is also a man of progressive views. He believes that character and culture are to be taken as the criteria for marriages rather than caste or religion. "I want a good and suitable mate for my worldly life. I want a person to listen to what I talk. I want a person who thinks with me. That is why I seek Pavai as my life mate.[9]" These are his views about his marriage. He is a firm believer of Tiruvalluvar's philosophy that all men are born equal and the differences among them are entirely due to their occupation.[10] This makes him take a vow: "This should not be the struggle of one Palani and Pavai. This is a struggle between the rights of a man and the blind faith of a society. I will take sides with the rights and humiliate the blind faith by digging a grave for it."[11] Muttayya the narrator of the novel *Malarvili* is a Ticket-Examiner in Railway Department. He was able to get that post by the influence and support of Collector Celvanayakam. By way of expressing his gratitude he meets the Collector frequently and makes enquiries about him and the welfare of his family. Mu. Va makes use of Muttayba's expression of gratitude and emotional attachment to the Collector as a means of unfolding the various qualities of the central figure Celvanayakam.

Though Tiruvenkatam in *Karit-tuntu* does not fall under the category of youths, we have to mention his name here because he is also a narrator of the story in *Karit-tuntu* like Muttayya who plays the same role in *Malar-vili*. In fact

the novelist creates him out of necessity to play the role of a narrator. He also makes use of Tiruvenkatam's characteristic traits such as his deep fascination for the art of drawing, his appreciation of the lame artist Mokan for his wonderful and attractive pictures drawn by means of simple charcoal-piece and above all his innate curiosity which prompts him to probe into the antecedents of that artist as well as those of Nirmala for the development of the story in many facets.

Malan in *Akal-vilakku* is a peculiar youngman amongst the creations of Mu. Va. He is a person who always strikes a note of humour in the novel where humour is a rare commodity. He provokes laughter in us through his superstitious beliefs and his irrational speeches and actions. He is amazingly interested in solving the cross-word puzzles and in partaking of the horse races. The following excerpt from the speech of the narrator of that novel serves as a standing testimony to his superstitious belief.

> "One day when he (Malan) and I (Velayyan) went to the beach we came across a person announcing loudly 'pills for fulfilling one's desire'. Immediately Malan rushed to him with great reverence as if the hawker was a deity and asked him to enlighten him about the efficacy of the pill. The magician explained that on the last Sunday of a month, at about the sun rise, if a person faces the east after a bath, and ties the pill to his right arm, it will produce a wonderful effect in him. He also explained that all his desires will be fulfilled. Malan immediately paid ten annas and bought it."[12]

2. Odious Characters

The water coming from the sky in the form of rain is crystal clear and pure. When it happens to fall on a saltish tract or a clayey ground, it gets changed according to the places. Similarly man by nature is good at his birth. But he turns into a thief or a munderer, a cunning person or a drunkard according to circumstances. The span of human life is very

short and even in that short period it appears to be difficult for human beings to lead a life without any blot. Some turn into wicked men as they are ignored or duped in their young or teen-age. Further, want of adequate food to appease hunger, anxiety about future, the manifold hurdles to lead a happy life, the disappointment met as a result of being forsaken by their near and dear are some of the factors which spoil their young and plastic minds and turn them into undesirable ways. In addition to this, in these days the cinema and the journals are not conducive to the development of normal character. The fickle-minded young men are easily and badly influenced by undesirable cinema and filthy-literature. Many of the film shows fail to exert salutary influence over the younger generations. On the other hand, they appeal only to the baser emotions and drive younger generations who are already degraded to sociological evils. In some cases the society in which one lives and the friend with whom one moves closely shape a person's character and the ways of his living. In certain cases family conditions such as a termagant wife, disobedient children and poverty are contributive factors for turning one into a drunkard or so. In certain other cases one's propensity for evil becomes responsible for turning one into a bad or an odious character.

In Mu. Va's novels, under this category Akor in *Nencil Oru Mul*, Annacami in *Pavai*, Kanakalinkam in *Kayamai*, Kecavarayan and Kotantaraman in *Man-kuticai*, Cuppu Rarattinam in *Alli* Tevatacan in *Perramanam*, Vacciranatan in *Vata-malar*, and Nilamekan in *Antanal* are significant characters. We can classify the odious characters in two categories. Those who are innately bad and are responsible for the ruin of their own lives belong to the first category. There are others who not only spoil their own lives but also spoil the society and the country by their obious nature. These people belong to the second category. They drag others also to their own ways Among these characters we may mention Kanakalinkam and Kecavarayan who are adepts in matters of cheating the society and subjecting the poor and the ignorant to difficulties by way of amassing wealth. So I have planned to study these characters and others in an

order. I have also tried to categorise those who turn over a new leaf by force of circumstances such as the admonitions of others and those who are incorrigible and who dig their own graves.

Akor :

Akor in *Nencil Oru Mul* is a rich land. lord of Iccip-puttur. He leads a life of luxury, a life transgressing the limits of moral code. Though he is a good man, his association with local Zamindar leads him to a life of drunkenness and debauchery. His excessive indulgence in the usual youthful dissipations renders him weak and tells upon his health. He is so sure of his infertility that he leads a reckless life and this aggravates his weakness. Since he is always in a drunken mood, he fails to take note of the deterioration in his physical conditions. Though he is an addict to all sorts of bad habits he is essentially good. In fact, he sincerely tries to free himself from the shackles of his vices. Really he gives due respect to the feelings of others. He gives up all his bad habits so that he can live with his second wife Vativu in peace He becomes a good head of his family as he is lucky enough to get a loving wife and through her a handsome male child He is not a hypocrite; he is frank enough to confess about his weaknesses. "I cannot control my mind. What can I do? When I happen to see women of questionable conduct my mind gets spoiled and I am inclined towards running after them. My mind wanders recklessly and somehow tries to trap them What I did the other day was only the outcome of my inclination ...But I feel very shy about even looking at a lady of high chastity......Though I become physically weak, my mind is never tired of the thoughts of women." [13] This is how Akor frankly reveals what is in his mind.

Cuppurattinam :

Cuppurattinam in *Alli* is an Engineer. He is efficient in his profession and has good income. He dislikes to love a life of simplicity. According to him one can derive pleasure

only by leading a luxurious life. He desires that our Indian women should play a 'sedulous ape' on the Western women in matters of dress and even smoking and drinking; they should freely talk and move with men sacrificing all the principles of modesty of Indian womanhood. No doubt his wife Alli is intelligent and kind. But she belongs to puritan group who prescribe austere ways of life. She expects that her husband also should live according to some ethical principles. She believes that one can derive immense pleasure only from a life of simplicity. But Cuppurattinam does not give any respect to those principles and he regrets on the other hand, that his wife is uncivilised. Thus they are incompitable with each other in their very outlook. Another discrepancy is in their profession. Cuppurattinam spends most of his times with buildings and machinery whereas Alli has to spend most of her time with patients in fighting against the diseases. Cuppurattinam goes to the extremes in all aspects; either to the extreme of liking an object ardently or to the extreme of pouring contempt on it. His attitude to anything is not one of balance. He whiles away his time either in search of immoral women or in reading filthy literature which easily pollutes his mind. One cannot even fathom his sexual appetite. His mind always wanders after new faces of women. Further Cuppurattinam finds no opportunity to make an internal search of his own faults. One can attribute this to the want of his friendship with good people. Nor his wife takes any initiative to reform him even though she had immense possibilities to do so. She might have reformed him by pointing out his faults at the opportune time and by admonishing him as she is fully aware of all his evil habits and faults. She might have even relaxed her ethical principles to certain extent and somehow managed to live with her husband; but she has failed to do even that. If she had lived with her husband for a few days patiently she might perhaps have reformed him. He was capable of being reformed at one stage or the other. After reading the book entitled '*What is fault*' he has left for instance, a note on its blank page which reads: "Had this book fallen into my hands some years ago my life would not have been on its ruin."[14] After his death a note-book was discovered

wherein all sorts of his writings were found. There was also in it a note which reads: "Mind is unstable. It is always in search of new things or new faces. It desires to enjoy a new face as if it could find a new thing in it. It always rejects the attainable but runs after the unattainable. The cumulative effect of this habit of mind is only anxiety. The mind has neither peace nor consolation".[15] These observations reveal that Cuppurattinam was always susceptible for reformation. The words of a taxi driver with whom Cuppurattinam spent his last days gives additional weight to our conclusion. "He is a good man. He always recites hymns on Lord Murukan. He talks of good things. He has good behaviour too. Unfortunately he has no good chances".[16]

Cuppurattinam does not possess any definite idea or knowledge about sex. He does not realise that self-restraint deserves constant practice as it is fruitful. His ignorance of this leads to his excessive indulgence in sex and he ultimately succumbs to the evil outcome. His unusual and unlimited lust spoils his good physique and he dies in the hospital like an orphan. The accounts of Cuppurattinam's career and his unfortunate end embody certain moral lessons and make us recall the modern critic Sisir Chatopadhyaya's staement: "All literature has a social, moral or even religious purpose, which may be implicit or explicit".[17] Perhaps Dr. Mu.va. teaches a lesson to the readers and also gives a note of warning through the life of Cuppurattinam. He gives it in an implicit way.

Nilamekan :

Nilamekan in *Anta-nal* represents those who turn into men of brutal behaviour, rowdies and men possessed of cunningness and deceit if they had been brought up in an atmosphere vitiated by ill-treatment, shower of abuses and want of motherly affection. One of the pastimes of his younger days is to catch hold of a beetle, to cut its tail a little and to insert a small broomstick in it and finally to enjoy the fun as the insect struggles to fly. As he grows older he commits many atrocities to satisfy his hunger and

sexual appetite.[18] Even his family life was not at all successful. There is no fragrance in his wedded life as it has been brought out by coersion Sometimes he becomes unmindful of the existence of his wife. Right from the beginning he has evolved for himself a poor conception of womanhood. He considers a woman as an instrument to appease his sexual appetite; he even considers her as of a sinful birth and as a stumbling block in one's life. His attempt to molest his friend's wife is only the outcome of his poor conception of womanhood. On his way to India from Burma by foot he gets, by chance, acquainted with an affectionate young woman whose salutary influence brings about a complete change in his attitude and conduct He himself confesses that she has purified him within six days. He then recalls all the evil deeds done by him in his past life one by one and repents very much for his abominable behaviour. He realises at length that there is godliness in womanhood and that love embodies miraculous powers of reforming even a wicked person.[19] He becomes completely chastened and metamorphosed.

Nakanatan :

Nakanatan in *Malarvili* plays an important role in the story. His deceptive calmness serves as a 'catalytic agent' for the development of the story. As we cannot perceive his action directly in the story we come to know from Muttayyan and other characters about him. Dr. V Sachithanandan compares him with Gerald of Somerset Maugham's *Mrs. Craddock*.[20] Nakanatan is ungrateful to Collector Celvanayakam who has helped him in not only in matters of his education but also by giving him food, clothing and residence. He even neglects his wife Malarvili and always pays attention to Kancanai with whom he has illicit connection. In the end he becomes ungrateful even to Kancanai and deserts her. We find the presence of this character throughout the story as a silhouette giving thrill to it at its every stage.

Kanakalinkam :

Kanakalinkam in *Kayamai* and Anavar, the hero of the story, are friends even from their boyhood. Kanakalinkam

is a commission agent. Like Anavar he also possesses strong and sturdy body and hard-heart His principles of life are the same as those of Anavar. "One should attain progress by any means" is the aim of his life. He is not worried about the nature of means. He is of the conviction that one cannot lead a happy life by sticking on to certain principles only. According to him, man should change his principles in conformity with the change of the government and local conditions. In his opinion, 'wicked person' means one who is not worldly-wise. He always manages to get the help of those who are in power by shadowing them, by praising them and by playing second fiddle to them. When those persons happen to be out of power he will not hesitate to avoid them and go after some others who capture power. His argument is that a woman prostitute sells her body whereas he, as a male prostitute, sells his brain. He selects only rich men who suffer from weaknesses such as avarice, thirst for power, and greed for fame and exploits those people by posing himself as an agent responsible for their election. Such a knave tries to help Anavar when he is involved in a murder case. In the end he also goes to jail for having committed the crime of threatening Tankacami with his revolver to extract money from him.

Kecavarayan :

Kecavarayan in *Man-kuticai* is undoubtedly an anti-social element. By committing many atrocities he amasses wealth and becomes a 'respectable' man in the society. He has not an atom of compassion in him. He mercilessly puts the poor to series of difficulties and even spits on them in the open street Sometimes he plays the role of an abettor for the poor for being beaten and kicked on some flimsy ground. Sometimes he comes forward to save the murderers or to give asylum to them.

Kecavarayan is the owner of some hereditary property. During the election time many use to seek his help. By adopting all sorts of methods and mobilising all forces at his command he collects the voters and sends them to the polling

booths. Generally the party which he supports wins. In every election he takes part and earns a lot of money from the contestants. His involvement in election work facilitates his deriving many benefits either from the Panchayat union or from the government. He succeeds in obtaining licence to run a few buses and becomes a fleet owner. Even after attaining the new status he does not give up the brutal behaviour, rowdyism, and many other atrocities. With the help of certain influential people he becomes an 'Honorary Magistrate' of his locality. The more he grows in influence the greater are his atrocities. He waits for an opportune moment and punishes those who oppose him and stand in the way of his evil actions. According to his pet religious code all his atrocities will be excused by special offerings and worship to God. Of all the odious characters created by Mu. Va. Kecavarayan shows a peculiar feature. Throughout his life he shines as a successful criminal He has not faced any situation by which he is exposed and made to reform himself. The novelist has not shown him as a reformed person as he has shown in other cases. The world is wide and one can always find both wicked and good people. By no human method any government can eradicate completely wicked people. The novelist, who knows the world only too well, perhaps wanted to allow Kecavarayan to thrive in his own way.

There are others like Annacami in *Pavai*, Kotantan in *Man-kutical*, Tevatacar in *Perramanam*, Vacciranatan in *Vata-malar* including some nameless characters with evil motives. Though they have no prominent role in the novels their wickedness and evil motives attract our attention. It appears to be necessary for my own purposes to cast a cursory glance at these characters. The evil motives of Annacami help us to understand the greatness of the chastity of Pavai. The various unscrupulous means adopted by Annacami to make Pavai his wife, and the heroic ways in which Pavai faces them and her disappearance from Velur on a particular night are some of the incidents which will ever be green in the reader's mind. It may be the novelists technique of bringing to light the salient features of the main character by exposing the

basic qualities of the odious minor characters. Similarly, the wicked action of an odious character sometimes serves as the genesis of the story Kotantan in *Man-kuticai* is a knave and a wicked fellow whose only aim is to molest each and every girl whom he comes across. Once when he was engaged in such an action he was attacked by Meyyappan and prevented from executing his evil deed. Later he was beaten to death by the same woman. The death of that knave serves as the nucleus of the story in *Man-kuticai*. Sometimes the action of the odious character in a novel as for example the illicit contact of Vacciranatan with Tanappan's wife serves as conclusion to the story. Thus the novelist makes use of these characters for his own purposes in some way or the other.

In the creation of odious characters, Dr. Mu.Va also takes into account certain redeeming features. In certain cases some of these good qualities also are seen as oases are seen in the desert. While the whole village is slandering the zamindar *(Nencil Oru Mul)* as a rogue, drunkard, gambler and a lascivious person, the novelist reads certain redeeming qualities in him through Akor :

> "I cannot express in words the greatest confidence which he (zamindar) has reposed in me. On one occasion he offered currencies worth rupees ten thousand encouraging me to do some business. The condition laid by him was that if I thrive in the business I must return it, otherwise I need not do so. When I offered to execute a bond for that amount he did not like the idea ...He may be a bad person in sevesal ways but he never entertains bad fellows in his house. He is such a terror to the womenfolk in the house that they feel as if they live amidst the fire. My association with him made me a drunkard; I was spoiled. But when I gave up that habit he was not angry with me ...It is very difficult to become his associate. Once we become his companions he would not forsake us."[21]

These are the impressions of Akor on the character of zamindar. Another peculiar characteristic that we find in the

novelist is, as Dr. R. Dhandayudham has pointed out,[22] that he wants to assess which is the reason for all the social evils instead of *who* is the cause for them. Dr. Dhandayudham further states in his another work, " Like other writers he (Mu. Va.) does not make only a few as criminals. Instead, he has expressed his mind in all his works that we should find out the particular section of the society which is basically responsible for converting people into criminals and weed out that particular section''.[23] This view of his is explicitly clear in the title which he has deliberately given to the novel *kayamai* (Knavery). Even 'Kayavan' (knave) will be an equally good title for the novel. The undesirable social set-up makes a person turn into a knave. That social set–up the novelist calls as 'Kayamai'. Instead of finding fault with a person and a knave or a rogue we should completely restructure the social set-up so that there would not be any chance for any person to turn into a knave or a rogue. Perhaps this idea has prompted him to give the title *Kayamai* to his novel.

3. Didactic Characters

The characters under this head are Aravali in *Nencil Oru Mul* and *Alli*, Arulappar in *Kallo? Kaviyamo?* and *Perramanam*, Meykantar in *Perramanam* and *Man-kuticai* and Murukayya in *Kallo? Kaviyamo*? and *Vata–malar*. These four chracters have attracted the attention of some critics. It is really unfortunate that these critics set out with certain preconceived notions about these characters Consequently their judgement becomes distorted. For instance, according to Thiru M. Ramalingam the characters created by Dr. Mu Va stand exclusively for the views and principles they preaeh. So, the critic concludes that for an ordinary reader they seem to be characters without life.[24] Another young critic Thiru R Mohan states that the didactic characters of Mu. Va are not integrated with the story; they stand isolated with their preachings only.[25] Even the veteran critic Xavier S Thaninayakam holds the same view. He says: "His characters are remembered, not by their humanity, but by their thought content."[26]

It is a well-known fact that novelists of renown in the world have used their novels as the best media to propagate their philosophy of life. They have created certain characters in their novels for propagating their pet philosophy. In this connection we have to remember the view of Frank N. Magill that Tolstoy, the Russian novelist, in his world famous *Anna Karenina* has created a character Konstantine Levin who reflects Tolstoy's own ideas about the Russian society in which he lived and the book is thus a closely knit plot of a woman bound in the fetters of the Russian social system and philosophy of life which attempts to untangle the maze of incongruities present in the society.[27] We are to assume that Mu. Va in the same way has created certain characters through whom he gives his message to the Tamil society either explicitly or implicitly. It is unfair to say that those characters are not life-like and that they are not organically related to the story and its other aspects. It is more unfair and hazardous to resort to such notions in the twentieth century which has witnessed the birth of men of lofty ideals like Gandhiji and Tiru Vi. Ka. The novelist has his artistic freedom to create such idealists in his novels. The argument of these critics that such idealists did not exist in the day-to-day world can be easily refuted. I have tried my best to establish how these characters are useful to change the turn of events in the story and how they disentangle certain problems and intricate situations.

Aravali :

Aravali B.A., B.T., is an ordinary School Assistant. He was neither a Professor nor a good writer to command respect from the community. But a small group of admirers always surround him because of his clear notions of social problems and of his moral calibre. He has deep-felt convictions about the day-to-day worldly life. He is a philosopher too. He is capable of doing good to even those who do him harm. He used to say often that he is the son of his father physically and the son of Tiruvalluvar spiritually.[28] Such was his moral calibre. He is a staunch supporter of the progressive views. Simplicity, sweetness of words, patience

and affectionate feelings are some of his dominant characteristics. He could pardon a peon who was employed as a tool to poison him by one Cuppurattinam.[29] One can see that many young men, family women and even aged persons get enlightened by his timely advice and improve their ways of life. He neither makes any down right condemnation of those who lived in the past nor extols those living at present unduly. He will always try to analyse the difference between the past and the present life of the society. His conception of God is this : God is a supreme power, a power which gives wisdom both to those who respect Him and to those who do not respect him.[30] He has realized the subtle difference between a theist and an atheist. It is his conviction that a theist is one who considers that the world is a family of God and who does some useful service to others and an atheist is one who always boasts of himself and leads a life of snobbishness.[31] Aravali reminds us of the aged priest father Zossima in the Russian novel '*The Brothers Karamozov*' written by Fyoder Mikhailovich Dostoevski. Both Aravali and Father Zossima are men of sterling character. Both of them preach and advise those who are in need of them. So far one can say that Mu Va has created Aravali simply to propagate his (Mu Va's) ideas and principles. But it is not proper to state that he has created Aravali as exclusively his mouth-piece. I shall try to show that Aravali shoulders certain other responsibilities in the novel.

Nencil Oru Mul is a novel dealing with a few problems and conflicts. The business of the novelist is not only to raise problems but also to offer solutions to them. Kannalakan is the son of Vativu, the heroine of the novel *Nencil Oru Mul*. He is born of her as a result of her illicit connection with her former lover Palaraman. Anparaci the legal daughter of Palaraman studies in a college at Madras where Kannalakan also studies. At the time both of them fall in love with each other. Vativu only knows that if the marriage is fructified it will be one of brother-sister relationship. She is not in a position to object to the marriage and convince her son by giving proper reasons. She is also afraid that her son may get frustrated if this alliance is broken. She is in a dilemma

which may be considered as the climax of the story. On one side she is ashamed of divulging anything about her secret sin. Her ardent affection for her son on the other hand stands uppermost in her mind. The reader is in a fix to anticipate how the novelist is going to conclude the story. In such a situation some novelists try to conclude the story by sacrificing either of the lovers by a suicide or some other means. But Mu. Va cleverly gives finishing touch to the story. He makes Vativu reveal the secret to Aravali who convinces Kannalakan by narrating a story and stops the marriage with Anparaci.[32] Here it is clearly seen that the character of Aravali is cleverly integrated with the thread of the story. It is also my firm conviction that the character of Aravali in the novel *Alli* plays an important role to turn the course of events in the story. Aravali meets Alli who lives in her father's house after abandening her husband. In the course of his conversation with her, Aravali explains the attempt of Cuppurattinam to poison him and then indirectly hints at the possibility of the same kind of attempt on her life also. He says: "Why should Alli be a target of trouble without any reason......Anything can be thought over. It may even be more advantageous to her if she leaves this place (Madras) and starts her practice in some other good city."[33] Being an intelligent lady Alli accepts his advice and goes to Bangalore to set up her practice there. Thus Aravali becomes part and parcel of the development of the story.

Some critics are of the opinion that Aravali is an artificial and unrealistic creation as he is a bundle of all good qualities. But I am not convinced by this view. Aravali has his own weaknesses and faults. This can be seen from Aravali's statement itself in one context:

> "I cannot boast of myself that I am given to pure thoughts. Sometimes my mind stoops too low........ Sometimes I am also affected by my lust when I happen to see some young women."[34]

In another context he states: "First, my family life is a failure and it taught me many lessons."[35] From these statements it is evident that Aravali is an ordinary mortal with flesh and blood and has his own loopholes.

Meykantar :

Meykantar is a peculiar didactic character in *Mankuticai.* He observes a sort of austerity in speech. Throughout the story we see that he never speaks out. He expresses what is in his mind by gestures and signs, and sometimes by writings on paper. The quantum of ideas revealed by him by his speechless medium is more than that revealed by the speeches and writings of the many thinkers of the world. Really he may be compared with Dhaksinamurtti who taught many esoteric truths to Canaka and others merely by means of gestures and signs. He does not like the idea of the publication of his views in book form. In fact, he has refused to give his consent in that direction, when Prof. Narentirar requested him to do so. One may guess that his age is approximately sixty five or seventy. He is a learned person. He knows Indian systems of philosophy. He has learnt something about Bible also. He knows English well, and is proficient in certain branches of science. Even Prof Narentirar who is a Doctor of Science approaches him and gets his doubt cleared. Meykantar's scientific knowledge is so subtle and sharp that he even goes to Prof. Narentirar's laboratory and makes suggestions with regard to his experiments. He is also well versed in music. The sight of any thing makes him think of God. He considers eating, sleeping, hearing and all such activities as a worship of God. It is his firm conviction that all these actions emanate out of that Supreme Power. If he happens to see boiling water he will interpret it as dance of Supreme Power. If he happens to feel the cool breeze he interprets it as a manifestation of God being in the form of heat of the Indweller. When he sees the burning faggots he interprets it that God is existing in the form of fuel as well as fire. According to him, God exists in the form of eatables, sense of taste and the tongue itself. It looks as if Meykantar is echoing the Hindu conception of God which identifies Him with the five elements.

His interpretations of certain hymns of *Tiruvacakam* and the couplets of *Tirukkural* are somewhat remarkable. According to him theism is only the code of conduct of an

individual if he follows the will of God; atheism is contrary to this path. He explains this principle by citing an instance. If a boat travels along with the current it is to its advantage. If it goes against the current it is but natural that it faces dire consequence.[36] This is how Meykantar explains his concept of God. Meykantar also meditates on social structure. He has understood the evils of society and also the remedial measures. His own statement explains his idea of the existing society. "The present day society is a hut constructed with mud. Rats can make their holes in it. But bandicoots can make big tunnels and even shake the foundation itself. As long as the society is like mud-hut one cannot prevent these natural courses of events. There are two alternatives for its improvement. One way is that we should abandon the mud-hut and live in caves as if we adapt ourselves to natural surroundings. The other way is that we should build a house with brick and mortar. Then only rats and bandicoots can be avoided." [37]

I shall now set myself to explain how Meykantar is made integrated with the story and how he serves as a living force in it. Of all the novels of Mu. Va *Man-kuticai* is the bulkiest as it runs into five hundred and four pages. The first hundred and eighty five pages of this work do not embody any incidents. Consequently, the readers feel as if they are reading a travelogue. The story starts only when Meyyappan comes into contact with Meykantar and when he establishes a good rapport with him. If one considers this point one can realize the importance of Meykantar in the story. Further, Meyyappan looks upon Meykantar, the enlightened man, as the only person to whom he can confide everything about his past family life which is one of bitterness. Incidentally Meyyappan is relieved of the inhibitions which have been playing havoc with his frame of mind. Thus the noble qualities of Meykantar serve as an impetus to Meyyappan to narrate the story. In other words Meykantar's noble qualities form the genesis of the story. This character also serves the purpose of throwing the light on the character and other qualities of Meyyappan. The dialogue that takes place between them serves as the medium for this purpose.

The experiment conducted by Meykantar and Prof. Narentirar in the laboratory explains to us how Meykantar serves as the moving spirit of the story. The result of the experiment is that a person gets the power of flying in the air without his figure being seen and identified. Meykantar and Prof. Narentirar conduct the experiment on Meyyappan and find that the result is successful. All that Meyyappan does in his state of invisibility and power of flight serve as the backbone of the story. It is for this reason that we are forced to consider Meykantar as an important character playing a pivotal role in the growth of the story.

Murukayya :

Murukayya in *Kallo ? Kaviyamo ?* and *Vata-malar* is a village school master. He has read many books of high ideals. He is a man of Gandhian principles. He has a great fascination for nature. He neither plucks flowers from plants nor purchases them from any flower bazaar. According to him even plucking a flower is a sin. He finds pleasure in simplicity. His views regarding the true theism are noteworthy. One should develop contempt for luxurious dress and consider it as an impediment to the peace and tranquillity of the society. When one sees a simple dress one should show an attitude of respect to it as if it is a portrait of Lord Buddha or Gandhiji. This attitude, he considers, as real theism. But simplicity, according to him, does not mean only simplicity in dress. One should cut selfishness at its very root as far as possible and lead a simple life without aspiring for power and position. Social reforms should change the very basic structure of the society. If a country follows Gandhian economic principles the poor and the needy will be able to acquire the basic requirements for the daily life. As far as possible food and clothing should not be the products to be turned out by machines. Of and on economists should formulate the economic policy suitable to one's country.

Many seem to be satisfied if they show devotion to Lord. Although it is necessary, it should be devoid of selfishness.

According to him progressive views should be instilled in the minds of the people. They should be made to understand that mere devotion to God without the idea of public welfare is of no use. They should think, according to him, that the society in which one lives is the family of God and in that sacred society every one should be helpful to other members of the family. For a life of simplicity and peace he gives three basic requirements :

> "For our happy life three factors should be in order. The first is our heart. Moral codes and worship of God were formulated only for its good maintenance. The second one is our body. To maintain it one should have good food, simple dress and noble profession and on occasions medicines. The third one is our environment. Our fore-fathers have formulated some social codes so that its basic structure may not be shattered." [38]

We shall now turn our attention to examine how Murukayya is an important character for turning the events of the story. On heariug the news that his sister has given birth to a child Tanappan goes to the place where his sister lives. Quite unexpectedly a lecture has been arranged for Tiru Vi. Ka at that place. Tanappan invites Murukayya and his (Tanappan's) friend Kumaravel to go to a picture. Murukayya gives the information that Tiru Vi. Ka is giving a lecture on that evening. He tells Tanappan that they can derive great benefit if they listen to the lecture as the lecturer himself is a man of high culture and enlightenment and Tanappan can understand the man only if he listens to his lecture. They all go to listen to the lecture cancelling the programme of seeing a picture. In the course of that lecture the preacher points out: "Even some good people are forced to adopt wicked ways because they are ignored and duped in their childhood". This casual remark pertaining to the topic produces a salutary effect on Tanappan slowly. As time goes on, Tanappan's mind begins to cogitate and consequently the story shows a perceptible change. The reader can see a complete metamorphosis in Tanappan at the end of the story, No doubt the

effect of the lecture produced a change in Tanappan's character But one should bear in mind that it was Murukayya who was responsible for Tanappan's chance of listening to the speech of that noble person. This is how Murukayya is integrated with the story and becomes an important character in it.

Arulappar :

Arulappar, the husband of Mankai, the heroine of the novel *Kallo? Kaviyamo?*, is seen as the head of the family and he also plays the role of a person of ethical principles in *Perramanam.* In the former his family life with Mankai has become an utter failure due to his sense of false prestige. This bitter experience has turned a new leaf in his life and he becomes a man of high ethical principles. Again in the former we come across him as a Professor of Philosophy and a man of progressive views. But we notice a complete change in him in his role in the latter: "So far I was in a narrow world. I lived for the sake of family only. Now, I have got down from a tree and now stand on the top of a hill. The sense of 'my tree' and 'your tree' slowly decreases; and the circle has grown bigger and bigger...We should discharge the duties of the family and at the same time we should serve for the progress of the society and the world at large. This is the true path that I should adopt in the rest of my life. Is it not advantageous if there is some metamorphosis in my life?"[39] This statement of Arulappar in one context in *Perramanam.* clearly reveals the change in his character and views.

His interpretation of a high ideal of life is interesting. "If one desires to lead an ideal life his ego should become extinct and at last his self should be nullified; or his mental vision should grow larger and larger and wander in the wide limitless world".[40] Prof. Arulappar who has travelled widely in the western continents has made a strong impact on the Americans by his lectures on the greatness of *Tirukkural*, the culture and the civilization of the ancient Tamil and the greatness of the Tamil language.

4. Writers or Journalists

In Mu. Va's novels we come across two eminent and significant journalists namely Marutappar in *Centamarai* and Kannappar in *Pavai*. These two writers are keen observers and men of understanding. Through them Mu. Va reveals his panoramic view of human life and advocates that the present social orders must be restructured. In addition to this, Mu. Va. through these characters explains the manifolding socio-economic problems that a writer encounters in his life. One can notice the complications that arise as they give expressions to their opinions freely, their struggles in their professions and their positions and responsibilities in their family life. Above all, we also notice that they are living in the utopian world. Dr. Mu.Va, we can assume, is revealing some of his experiences in his life as a writer in a way through these characters.

Kannappar :

Kannappar is the editor of a periodical "Life". Whenever he sees the difficulties of others he not only sheds tears but also helps them to the extent of his capacity. Sometimes he artistically portrays the pleasures and pains that he meets with in his life. Pen and paper seem to be his intimate friends who serve as an outlet to bring out all that are hidden in his mind.

His artistic mind visualises the motherhood and divinity in the womanhood. It is painful for him to see prostitutes in a country where Laksmi and Saraswathi are considered as the great Goddesses. But unfortunately his wife does not adjusts to his tastes and temperament. His liberal education, culture, profession and income fail to attract the mind of his wife. He himself confesses that both of them are 'pulling on' somehow in their domestic life. He is of a firm conviction that the reformation of any woman should proceed from the reformation of all women in general.

According to his philosophy it is sufficient if one possesses love for all creatures and that is what God expects

from us. Rituals, ceremonial offerings to God are immaterial as it is not God's mandate that all should praise Him. It is the divine injuction that everyone should discharge his duties and responsibilities with some devotion.

Kannappar advocates love-marriages, But according to him it is not sufficient, if sincerity in love, sacrifice in the outlook. and equality in their actions are found among the lovers. They should think of their economic status also. In his own words his philosophy is this: "Money is the basic necessity of life. But where is the place for ethical principles, independent views and sentiments of truth? When religious and educational institutions are spoiled by the greed of money it is but natural that the lovers' mind also gets spoiled by avarice".[41] And again, "In a world where people are worried about the future, the sentiment of love should take a holiday for sometime".[42] We may assume that the novelist uses Kannappar as a mouth-piece to expose all the fine sentiments pertaining to a family as portrayed in Cankam classics for those living in the present. We are further led to think that the novelist employs Kannappar to explain his own pet theme that love marriage will be an utter failure if the lovers are not given to economic independence.

Marutappar :

Marutappar usually writes in the periodical '*Tenral*' under the head 'Ur Vampu'. (Talk of Town). Sometimes he uses to write under a pen name 'Mun'. One can neither identify this character nor study him as one can identify and understand Kannappar. As the story develops we slowly come closer to his traits. Marutappar's writing as well as speech are very powerful. He possesses an artistic bent of mind. Both Centamarai and Tilakam are attracted by his physical appearance". Marutappar's sparkling eyes and beautiful hands and his persuasive eloquence have completely metamorphosed me into a new woman"; "I have seen several men.........but Marutappar's look at that time has given me a new birth........Every look of his has almost melted my spirit. I have met only a manly person on

that day"[43] are the statements of Tilakam. We are also led to conclude that Marutappar is the most handsome of all the men characters created by Mu. Va. His artistic presentation of men and matters is to be accounted for his great popularity. But his pen pictures under the head "Ur Vampu" (Talk of Town) have won many admirers and Fans.

In spite of such encomiums poured on him, Marutappar states that he had started his life with some mental reservations as he is afraid of criticism. Marutappar, a writer who advocates love-marriages always, at last submmits himself to the wishes of his mother and brother-in-law and marries a lady in the traditional way. No doubt, Marutappar and his wife lead a happy life. But they do not share common interests. Marutappar has learnt much about the ways of the world; but his wife is an adept in running the household affairs only. Somehow they 'pull on'. Sometimes Marutappar regrets the want of temperamental affinities between his wife and himself The novelist is seen at his best in portraying the internal conflicts whenever Marutappar lapses into such a mood. The opinions of the novelist himself on the incongruous matches in general are communicated to us in an oblique manner He points out the various ways in which the family life of unequal matches falls on evil days. He also indicates that only those who have got a conscience like Marutappar can overcome such mental conflicts to certain extent and lead a happy wedded life.

5. Men of Worldly Wisdom

Wisdom which is the mark of intellectual development would not promote the success of a man in all walks of life. Even if a learned men does not follow the precepts of great sages and savants, he can cultivate moral excellence by adopting the path of right conduct. But this kind of learning is not the be-all and the end-all.[44] Fully aware of this saying of Valluvar, Mu. Va who has created ideal personalities, men of high moral calibre and high culture, has not failed to create certain personalities of adequate wordly wisdom. He has even created certain characters of bookish learning only and

has shown that they are utter failures in their life. Collector Celvanayakam is a good example of this type. One who is born in the twentieth century and who has not adjusted his life and ways of conduct in consonance with the twentieth century trend will tread the path that leads to his failure. In order to emphasise this worldly wisdom, Mu. Va has created three select characters who besides their meagre education have grasped the practical ways of the world. They are Mani in *Malar-vili*; Venkatecan in *Kayamai* and Kumarecan in *Karit-tuntu.* Like Bernardshaw who has created in his plays certain dramatic personages to ventilate his rational views, Mu. Va has created certain characters in his novels to propagate his views of life. The three characters mentioned above are the examples of the mouth-pieces of Mu. Va. The sum and substance of their preaching may be stated as follows: The society of to-day is involved in money-hunt. Money has special significance in all walks of life. As long as we live, we must be careful in dealing with it. We should control it and channelise it in a measured way. If we are to renounce it we should renounce it once for all like Lord Buddha, Lord Jesus Christ, St. Tirunavukkaracar and Mahatma Gandhi. There is no half way between the renouncement of wealth and attachment to it. Instead of becoming a slave to money we should make money our slave. Excessive indulgence in dissolute ways will spoil only the individual. Sexual desire co-exists with the body and its nervous system. It cannot be completely overlooked but it can be controlled in a certain practically tested ways. Similarly, greed for money and attempt to amass it by questionable means will land not only the individual into trouble but the family, society and even government. This is one extreme. But we cannot ignore the idea of possessing wealth for our daily requirements. We cannot afford to preach like great savants and ignore the value of money. Once we ignore money we cannot continue to live in this world.

Mani in *Malar-vili* appears to be mad after money but his every statement agrees with the ways of the society in the twentieth century. What we learn from books is only theoretical. Many books of Economics emphasise the importance of

labour which is the real wealth of the nation. But many people fail to translate into action all that they profess in favour of the dignity of labour. Consequently there are certain sections of society who never give importance to labour but value money only. These sections amass money by hook or crook. Mani points out the trend of these sections in a beautiful way in his conversation with Muttayya. Speaking to him he says: " Whose fault is this if you think that we are in a progressive world and that we are even in the twenty third century? But my thought is crystal clear. I consider that money is ruling the people and we are in the twentieth century ".[45] In another context he continues: " Money will not give any trouble to us if we live like Tolstoy, Gandhiji and Lord Buddha. Otherwise you should become a monkey-charmer like me who can control the money by chaining and keeping it under control. This is the only way to get on with this world ".[46] From the words of Mani we are likely to misunderstand him as an avaircious man. He is a rationalist with progressive views and means what he says. He does not preach that money is the *sine qua non* of one's life. He points out that money rules the society which is not sufficiently enlightened. Living in such a society he thinks that we should be alert and vigilant. In another context he says to Muttayya: " I am going to allot a portion of the interest accruing in my deposit of rupees one lakh for the education of the poor. If we spend it on temples and tanks the importance of money increases. If we spend it on education the arrogant power of money is controlled. The more you grow wise the less the importance money acquires. Wisdom is the only enemy of money. It is also the only friend of hard work ".[47] This view of Mani rather echoes G.B. Shaw's economic theory.

Venkatecan in *Kayamai* seems to be a man of intelligence combined with experience. He is a man who is posted with adequate information about the structure of the present day society, its draw-backs, the reason for those draw-backs and the remedial measures to remove them and the service to be undertaken by an individual in this respect. He is also credited with a vast knowledge of men and matters which he has acquired as a detached observer. The novelist uses him as

his mouthpiece to convey his ideas to the masses in matters of social reformation. In one context he conveys certain ideas of reformation through Venkatecan. As we know, the present-day society is given to money-hunt. People are avaricious enough to amass wealth. They ignore culture; they have no faith in hard-work; they are not satisfied with the income which is proportionate to their effort. They are always in search of easy means of earning money So men who live in this kind of society are given to a series of conflicts between truth and falsehood, between intelligence and emotion, between poverty and affluence and so on. If an average man who has an implicit faith in the principles of ethics is subjected to these conflicts, he is likely to experience serious set-backs and hardships. The solution suggested by the novelist through the mouth of Venkatecan seems to hold good : " All cannot live", says Venkatecan, " like Harichandra who takes a vow that he would not budge an inch by way of deviating from the right path even if his family is reduced to ruin. It is not necessary for a man to imitate Harichandra in his practical life... Right thinking is sufficient If there is change in one's outlook everything will change automatically. This will form a firm foundation of a great society. If there is proper change in the environment also for translating the right thought into action, then one can expect a fruitful revolution in society".[48]

Among the characters created by Mu. Va. Venkatecan seems to be one who has understood the spirit of human psychology. As an instance of his insight into psychology we can cite the five fold classification of men and women and the rationale he has propounded for such a classification.[49] Even though he is fully aware of all the atrocities and evil acts committed by Anavar, he moves with Anavar very carefully and with extreme politeness and sees to it that no trouble comes to him from Anavar. He strictly follows Valluvar's advice that one should wait patiently till the opportune moment comes as a heron stands patiently with its wings folded to catch a fish.[50] While his colleagues betray their undesirable emotions, Venkatecan patiently waits for an occasion to expose Anavars's atrocities. When Anavar is caught in a criminal case Venkatecan rises to the occasion

and deposes him by exposing his atrocities in detail with an irrevocable evidence.

Kumarecan in *Karīt-tuntu* is a young character who holds a prominent place in Mu. Va's novels. Though a student of Prof. Kamalakkannar, he vehemently opposes his professor who advocates capitalistic economy. He is a staunch supporter of the scientific socialism of Karl Marx. His deep-felt conviction is that the theory of Karl Mary is the only panacea for all the social evils. According to him there is no use of bestowing the right of franchise on the people as long as their appetita remains unquenched. There is no use of preaching equality and fraternity on the pulpit while we are given to assessing the worth of a person by the yardstick of his wealth. He asks why people do ape Western civilisation without adopting its merits. He asks whether it is not the duty of the government to solve the unemployment problem. As it is found in Western country our government should pay at least some premium to the unemployed till it finds jobs for them. Prompted by his progressive views he clamours for a radical change of the world. He fails to realize that the changes take place gradually but not abruptly. Though his convictions are strong and steadfast, his impatience and indignation involve him in troubles.

We cannot fail to derive a fact from Kumarecan's life if we view him from an artistic bent of mind. He is not connected with any of the events that form the story of the novel. On the other hand he is an intruder. Perhaps the novelist has projected his own pet notions of the Marxist theory of social life into this character.

6. Professors

Prof. Kamalakkannar :

Among the intellectuals found in Mu. Va's novels, Prof. Kamalakkannar seems to occupy the fore-most rank. He is a professor of psychology. His nobility and broad-mindedness and his frank discussions attract the attention of a large number of his students. According to his students, the enlighten-

ment they receive by their contact with the professor is more than what they derive from browsing a large number of books in the library. Prof. Kamalakkannar is not only a scholar in psychology but also an expert in economics and well-versed in sociology. We see him advocating capitalism and at the same time downrightly condemning Marxist philosophy or communistic view of life. In his own words his philosophy may be restated: "If one wants to completely eradicate the distress of the poor, one should see that people are united and that they are taught about the use of scientific instruments. There should be an industrial revolution in India as we see in America. If one raises the standard of living of the masses the status of our nation will be raised in the community of the nations. It is only then there will be great demand for things and consequently their production also will be increased. There will be a good industrial climate in vogue. Many industries will be started and the problem of unemployment will be solved. So people should have a strong faith in science and technology".[51] This, in a nutshell, is the economic policy of the professor. One need not emphasise the philosophy of equality. It is sufficient if the poor get sufficient food, adequate dress, convenient abode and proper facilities for recreation. According to him the wealth of the capitalist after all serves its own purposes. There is no need for us to advocate an economic equality as long as the poor get all the amenities of life.

Prof. Kamalakkannar possesses a peculiar artistic bent of mind. But he suffers from some prejudice against drawing and painting. He thinks that it is a waste of time to sit and write or paint pictures. He adduces evidence from Ruskin's *Modern Painters* in support of his opinion. He is a man of progressive and modern views. He laughs at those who advocate a life of simplicity. It is a matter of common knowledge that those in Tamil Nadu who are in search of life-partners try to select only virgins. According to Prof. Kamalakkannar. this kind of mentality is out of date and is full of superstitious belief. He gives a peculiar definition of chastity. According to him, it is not proper for a woman to be one's wife and to have some illicit connection with another. When she lives with a man she should not show any

ingratitude to him. This kind of behaviour of a woman, he considers, her chastity.[52] He even believes that one can run a family life without getting married to a woman by observing certain religious rites. What he has preached he practises in his own life. He carries on a family life with the Bengali woman Nirmala without marrying her in the traditional way. He gives all rights to her also in the domestic life. It is his unshakable conviction that when a man and a woman has the right to lead a family life by their union, they have their every right to part with each other if they are prepared to do so.

Though Prof. Kamalakkannar talks always of progressive views, he does not accept socialistic views of life. In this he appears to be selfish. Being fascinated by the standard of life in American society, he longs to see the same standards of life in India. But he does not propose any solutions to the problems of our society. This is his limitation.

Ciralar :

He is a character in *Perramanam.* He is also a student of Prof. Arulappar in *Kallo? Kaviyamo?* He marries Arulappar's daughter Tenmoli. Ciralar serves as a professor in a college at Vellore and establishes reputation. Even though Manivannan is an adopted child, he shows ardent affection to him as a foster-father. He has got a detailed knowledge about the rearing of children, child psychology and adolescent psychology. He thinks that there are certain defects in the present-day system of education: "Examination system should be scrapped. It is like a deadly disease retarding the physical and mental development of the young men of our country. But even the so-called reformers of education get accustomed and acclimatized to the existing system. They are more happy if their children secure top marks in the examination"[53] - these are his reasons for advocating a change in the system of education.

Ciralar is of the opinion that alms-giving itself is a crime. This habit among men is the primary cause for in-

creasing the number of beggars in our country. The same habit gives an encouragement to many to take to begging itself as a profession.

7. Rural Folks

We can say that Mu. Va is successful in an appreciable way in his probing into the rural environment and also the minds of the rural folks. Among the rural folks Camanna in *Akal-vilakku*, Ekamparac-cettiar and Velup-pillai in *Pavai* and the village munisiff in *Malarvili* leave an indelible impression on our mind and are of perennial interest. These characters remind us of the rustics whom we come across in our daily life. Mu. Va has portrayed them, we can assert, with photographic fidelity. To quote one descriptive passage from *Akal-vilakku*

> "Camana at that time was about forty years old. But he had a good muscular physique. Brown in complexion, baldness has inhabited his head adjoining his fore-head. A spot of wafer of red sandal paste with inset Kumkum dot adorned his forehead. The sacred ash smeared on the fore-head in the morning has just faded due to perspiration. His kind look and his infectious smile seemed as if they reflect the purity of his heart".[54]

The minute details of this description are enough to bring out a vivid picture of the physical appearance of Camanna as well as his tranquil heart. The novelist's portrayal of the physical background of his village and the daily routine business which he transacts in the capacity of the Village Munisiff have added to the clarity of the description of the personality of Camanna in his natural setting. One wonders how a critic like Tiru M. Ramalingam has missed the descriptive passages of this kind when he pronounced the following verdict: "When we listen to the radio broadcast sometime on a Sunday evening, we do not see the face of the actors nor their facial expressions, nor the movement of their limbs, nor the atmosphere in which they move, nor the background in which

they live. We hear only their voices. Similar is our experience when we read Mu. Va's novels".[55]

Ekamparac-cettiar in *Pavai* is a character created by Mu. Va with a sense of realism. He has immortalised him by portraying him with all the natural traits of a native countryside gentleman His characteristic pot-belly, brown complexion, short stature, his broad eyes and his safron-coloured robe and characteristic speech with frequent stops have become memorable. Besides his physical appearance, his habit of sitting in the pial on a mat and reading *Harichandrapurana*' his usual morning habit of cleaning his teeth with native banian-root brush and taking bath in the adjoining well and his characteristic way of settling the village disputes and bringing reconciliations between the opposing parties under the shade of the banian tree – all these bring home to our mind the images of innumerable Cettiar gentlemen living in the country-side. Similarly the characteristic traits of Velup-pillai like speaking loudly and acting speedily and above all his eccentric physical appearance give him a permanent place in our minds. In the like manner the village munsiff and his wife in *Malarvili*, the old loving couple of Perunkanci village, Cokkan and Macan in *Akalvilakku* the scavanger and the village head-man of *Pavai* are some of the characters that have attained an immortal status in the novels. Mu. Va's creation of village folks brings to our mind the rural atmosphere wherein one can find certain age-long habits certain superstitious habits like observing omens, certain rural crafts and their habit of addressing people as if they are addressing their own kith and kin.

Even children created by Mu, Va capture our mind. They appear like the coloured flowers in the garden of his novels resembling the children of kinder-garten of Frobel. Their pure Tamil names like, Arul, Alakan, Narumalar etc., really captivate our minds. And even servants like Kantacami in *Perramanam*, Kantan in *Kayamai* and the servant of Collector Celvanayakam in *Malar-vili* created by Mu. Va have some charm about them though their role in the novels is brief.

NOTES:

1. Pakiamuttu (ed.) *Vitutalaikkuppin Tamil Navalkal*, p.38.
2. *Ecclesiastes*, V.1 in Chapter 12.
3. *Psalm*, 119, v.9.
4. *Allị*, pp. 118–119.
5. *Art of Fiction*, p.83,
6. *Characters Make Your Story*, p.139
7. *Kural*, 220.
8. *Anta-nal*, p.206,
9. *Pavai*, p. 60.
10. *Kural*, 972.
11. *Pavai*, p. 130.
12. *Akal-vilakku*, pp. 111–112.
13. *Nencil Oru Mul*, pp. 176–177.
14. *Alli*, p. 315.
15. ibid. p. 331.
16. ibid. pp. 326–327.
17. *The Technique of Modern English Novel*, p. 225.
18. *Anta-nal*, p 104.
19. ibid, pp. 109–110.
20. Dr. Mu. Va and Somerset Maugham (An article in *Dr. Mu. Va*, International Institute of Tamil Studies, Madras-20. 1975).
21. *Nencil Oru Mul*, p 340.
22. *Tarkala Tamil Ilakkiyam*, p. 39.
23. *Dr. Mu. Va.*, p. 23.
24. *Punaikatai Valam*. p. 55.
25. *Dr. Mu. Va. vin Navalakal*, p. 48.
26. '*The Novelist of the City of Madras*', Tamil Culture, Vol. X, No. 2, April–June, 1963. p. 18.
27. *Masterpieces of World Literature in Digest Form*, p. 32.
28. *Nencil Oru Mul*, pp. 44-45.
29. *Alli*, p. 109.
30. ibid. p. 109.
31. *Nencil Oru Mul*, p. 322.
32. *Nencil Oru Mul*, pp. 438–439, 547.
33. *Alli*, p. 177.
34. *Älli*, p. 285.
35. ibid. p. 285.
36. *Man-kuticai*, p. 499
37. ibid. p. 503.
38. *Vatamaḷar*. p. 175.
39. *Perramanam*, p. 154.
40. ibid. p. 282. This first half of the statement echoes the views of Tayumanavar expressed in the hymn 12. Perhaps the influence of the mystic saint has inspired to Arulappar to make such a statement.
41. *Pavai*; p, 185.

42. ibid, p 187.
43. Centamarai, p. 127.
44. Kural, p. 140.
45. *Malar-vili*, p. 92.
46. ibid., p. 96.
47. ibid , pp. 157-158.
48. *Kayamai*, p. 105.
49. ibid. pp. 23–28.
50. *Kural*,, p.490.
51. Karit-tuntu, p. 89.
52. ibid. p. 240.
53. *Perramanan*, p. 239.
54. *Akal-vilakku*, pp 31–32.
55. *Punaikatai Valam* , pp. 53–54.

CHAPTER VI

MINOR CHARACTERS — WOMEN

According to Tiruvalluvar, knowledge obtained through *tapas* gives an ascetic a true insight into the nature of reality and of life. This insight into the nature of life becomes infructuous if it fails to influence his conduct and inspire him to consider other living beings as valuable as his own life.[1] Such sympathetic realization of the identical nature of life as defined by Valluvar is not only necessary for an ascetic but also for all others especially an artist or a novelist who are supposed to render certain services to humanity at large. The novelist deals with human beings and his profession makes him write always about the pleasures and pains, the ups and downs in life, the cares and worries of men of the world. One cannot be a successful novelist if he is incapable of showing sympathy, for his own characters. Further, a sense of empathy in a novelist will also enable him to create life-like characters. This becomes true especially in matters of women characters. Only a novelist with a soft heart, sharp intellect and sympathetic attitude will be able to create women characters successfully, though he faces some difficulty in views of the fact that women are more often subjected to internal conflicts than men. The novelist should be able to probe into the complexity of the nature of women. The experience of Anais Nin, the American woman novelist is in support of this view. "I spent more times on woman characters", she observes, "because I understood them better, because I felt that they had more conflicts than men and above all because I felt that a great part of women was as yet inarticulates".[2] Therefore, the novelist who creates women characters should be equipped with the knowledge of the internal and external conflicts of women and the intricate economic sociological problems governing their life. As a man who has served as professor in a college for thousands of youngmen and women, as a counseller who has solved many intricate problems in families,[3] and as a keen observer of men and matters of the world, Mu.

Va had enriched himself with a vast knowledge of women in general. The five-fold classification of women in *Kayamai* can be cited as the best instance of his knowledge of women.

First Type : Women who live in modesty like Tamil women of the ancient days and who consider the family as their world and their husband as the deity, derive their highest pleasure from the kitchen as well as from their children in the cradle.

Second Type : Women who aspire for a profession according to their education and who lead half of their life in the family and the other in the place where they work are essentially attached to the family life like the women of the olden days and their affinities with the outer world are normal.

Third Type : Married women who have more attachment with the outside world lead a mechanical humdrum family life since they cannot afford to divorce themselves from it. They have very little attachment with the family as drops of water on a lotus leaf. But they feel at home in the place where they work, in the friends' circle and in recreation clubs. Consequently, the attention they pay to their husbands is not spontaneous.

Fourth Type : There are certain women who have no chance of marrying for want of a suitable match; there are others who refuse to marry even under favourable circumstances. Among these two categories many lead a life of chastity as spinsters for fear of being treated with contempt and disrespect.

Fifth Type : Women of this type lead a licentious life turning a deaf ear to all criticism and slander.[4]

Of a woman's life the significant phase is the period of her youth. The next important phase is that of her being a good and amicable housewife. The state in which she is considered as an ideal mother by others, is the third important phase of her life. If a woman is successful in the last two

phases mentioned above, her life can be said to be complete. But some of the women do not enter these stages at all. They are duped by society and are forsaken by their lovers; these women remain spinsters for ever. There are others who develop fear of marriage because of their knowledge of the deceitful nature of certain men and thus opt for single-blessedness. Some others due to economic reasons sacrifice their life for the sake of the family wherein they have taken birth. These women spend all their earnings for the family. In some other cases fortune does not favour them. They become widows even before they beget children. Still there are some who go astray pathetically because of their economic conditions; these are enamoured of wealth and pomp. In addition to this they are prompted by the sexual urge to lead their life according to their whims and fancies at the expense of their health and morality. Even then a few of them boldly face all the vicissitudes of their life, comic or tragic, and successfully carry on with their life.

Among the women characters of Mu. Va's novels we come across all these types and hence the need to classify and study them under the following heads. (1) Youths, (2) Spinsters and lovelorn maidens, (3) Housewives, (4) Mothers, (5) Widows, (6) Women with worldly knowledge and (7) Odious women.

1. Youths

As Mu. Va has portrayed the life of youngmen in his works, he has also shown the life-picture of young women. Among them a few possess all the amiable qualities which the novelist desires to have in them. In other words, he has created young ideal women whom he likes to see in society; he has also created certain types of young women whom he sees in the present day society. Among his creations mention may be made of Anparaci, Cantira in *Nencil Oru Mul*, Imavati in *Akal-vilakku*, Cavittiri in *Malar-vili*, Centamarai in *Centamarai*, Manvili in *Perramanam*, Menmoli in Kayamai, and Vani in *Anta-nal*. Some of the young women who belong to

this category have been dealt with elsewhere in this thesis under different heads. Mu. Va has also created new type of 'modern women' in his novels as poet Subramaniya Bharathi has portrayed in one of his poems.[5] There is vast difference between the women of olden days and those at present. The former had no opportunity to move about beyond their home environment. But nowadays they have immense possibilities of going out for shopping, for visiting picture-houses, for attending the educational institutions, for obtaining the medical treatment for their children and thus they have free access to the friends of their fathers and husbands. Their contact with men seems to be something inevitable. It looks as if the author advocates the free-movement of young women with men through Imavati in *Akal-vilakku*, emphasising at the same time the social contacts without transgressing the limits of moral codes. Imavati is the class-mate of Cantiran at college. She moves freely with Cantiran as if she moves with her brother. But Cantiran on the other hand entertains different motives when he moves with her. He looks upon her as his lady love. When the news of Imavati's marriage reaches him, he gives up his studies driven by disappointment and frustration. On hearing the fate of Cantiran Imavati says:

> "(Addressing Velayyan) what a world is this! When two women move with each other do they not move with love transgressing the physical limits? Similarly, when two men move do they not move as women do? When a man and a woman move do they not possess the mind? Where has it gone? Why should there be this transgression and disappointment?"[6]

If young men and women find answers to the searching questions of Imavati and change their undesirable attitude to each other, they will add to the cultural well-being of the present-day society.

Almost all men and women born in this world display an urge to marry, bring forth children and rear them. That is, many women feel that it is their primary duty to serve the family only in a limited way. Their aim may be correct. The

family condition in ancient days was different from that of the present day. The women folk in those days carried on with their lives and had no affiliations with the outer world. But to-day the conditions are completely changed and the whole world has become one family. Just as a bad incident which occurs to a member of a family affects the whole family, a small untoward happening in one country affects many other countries of the world. The clash between Egyptians and Israelities now affects the Indians and Pakistanies. Therofore, a man not only has to develop the concepts of '*he*' and '*his*' but also has to struggle for the society, country and the world. Sometimes he has to sacrifice the concepts of '*he*' and '*his*' for the larger interest. This is applicable to both men and women. Vani in *Anta-nal* is the best example in this context. She was eighteen years of age when she reaches her college education. She is soft-hearted by nature. During the period of World War II her family was one of the thousands of families who footed the whole distance from Burma to India. Even at the age of eighteen Vani has learnt many things which are far beyond the reach of her age from her father Arumukam. She herself has witnessed many gruesome scenes. She glanced at millions of people dying and being destroyed like ants on account of the selfishness or personal spite of one or two leaders. Seeing the tragic condition with her own eyes, she thinks of opposing the policies of the then government by a counter propaganda. To achieve this she sets aside her family issues, parents and above all her unalloyed love to Nakappan. Her unselfish dedication to social service can be seen in her following statement :

> " In this state of affairs it is rather ignorant to think of family and more so to think of my love......Even to think of myself and those relating to me is also a crime, a heinous crime. But the calamity, distress and mental agony suffered by the world belong to me! The world is a big ocean in which I am a small drop. Come what may, I too will make a small effort. If many a drop gathers along with my small effort there will arise a big wave, a wave which will lash against the wild fire. We will see whether it will be extinguished or not. "[7]

In the course of the propaganda launched by her she is arrested and jailed along with Nakappan. Even in the witness-box she is unflinching in her attitude and firm about her conviction. She refuses to tender an apology and swerve from her righteous path even though she is aware of the dire consequences, namely, ten years of rigorous imprisonment.

> "Our conscience tells something. We tell the same thing here......War cheats people, it distresses them; it threatens them......We say that it is a Himalayan blunder by involving us in the war for which the reason is attributed to whatever be the quarters, in whatever be the ways and whatever be the forms. War destroys our very life whoever wages it, whenever it is waged and whatever be the reason for which it is waged. That is why we declare that it is the greatest sin if we offer our co-operation to it ... For this reason we extended our service according to our capacity. If you think that our noble action is a crime, you can proceed as you please."[8]

These are excerpts from her depositions in the court. If several women "awake arise and stop not till the goal is reached" in the spirit of Vani the humanity can be saved from the horrors of war.

A woman who is endowed with modesty, simplicity, sense of fortitude and duty is bound to follow ethical principles. Menmoli in *Kayamai* is one such. The novelist introduces her to the readers as follows :

> "Menmoli was aged nineteen. But her face beamed with innocence as if she was a small child. There was child-like quality in her face without the application of cosmetics such as face-power, lipstics and eyetex ......There was beauty in her sparkling eyes and glance. Her side-way glance cannot be compared with gazelle-eyed look because she is an educated girl equipped with the instrument of knowledge. Therefore there was no bewilderment in her look; there were fearelessness and enlightenment."[9]

Though tender in her body, she was a woman with strong

determination and fortitude. The lectures of Vivekanantar, the sacred *Kural* and Thiru V. Ka's books which she has read have moulded her personality. The simplicity of Kannaki, the renunciation of Matavi and the devoted service of Manimekalai have influenced her. Therefore, she is fearless to face the knavery in whatever form it visits on her. She is of strong conviction that justice will not succumb to knavery. Being aware of the atrocities of Anavar, her parents dissuade her from attending the office because at any time she may face untoward events. But Menmoli replies : "To be in the house is an easy thing. All can do this. I want to try to achieve things that are difficult to achieve......Leave me free to continue my struggle. Gandhiji, Vivekanantar, Ilanko and Tiruvalluvar are there to guide and help me".[10] As she has cordial relation with Nallayyan she too has been confined to prison. This shows her unalloyed love.

The novelist desires to create ideal women of the twentieth century in the type of Kannaki. It is again his desire to see women like Kannaki in the Tamil land with love, tenderness and sense of honour. Anparaci in *Nencil Oru Mul* is one such character. The novelist reads some of the noble qualities of Kannaki in her.[11] She is one of the many youths who admire lecturers of Aravali. Her frequent contact with Aravali gives an opportunity to gain enlightenment on many issues and also sense of fortitude. Just as Kavunti–atikal praises kannaki in *Cilappatikaram* Aravali praises her noble qualities. He says to Vativu in the novel; "Madam, I tell you sincerely. I have not seen such a nice girl so far in my life. Certainly there are good people. I know Parvati, Alli and many others. Any way at this age with such high sense of culture......"[12] We know about the role of Fate in the life of Kannaki at different stages. At the end it separates Kannaki once for all from Kovalan culminating in his tragic end. Similarly, the fate separates Anparaci from Kannalakan once for all. But the latter does not face any serious consequences. "Is there anybody in this world to counteract the consequences ordained by fate"[13] asks Bharathi. Perhaps this question is uppermost in the mind of the novelist when he leaves the life of Anparaci a great question mark.

So far we have come across young women whom the novelist desires to see in his life. Now, here follows a list of certain young women whom the novelist has met in his experience. They are Cantira in *Nencil Oru Mul*, Cavittiri in *Malar-vili*, Centamarai in *Centamarai* and Manvili in *Perramanam*. Their life is uneventful, dull and dreary. They do not set out with any ideals. There are no praiseworthy incidents in their life. So, they are only ordinary women in the true sense of the term.

Manvili in *Perramanam* is an ordinary servant maid. She is only a Cinderella. Unable to bear the various kinds of illtreatment at the hands of her step-mother, she works as a servant-maid elsewhere just to appease her hunger. She is not like any other servant-maid who is amenable to all kinds of evil actions. The novelist wants to emphasise through this character that there are still in this world certain women like Manvili to throw a challenge to the bourgeois. Though not educated well, she gains a good place in our mind by her certain amiable qualities. Cavittiri in *Malar-vili* is also a poor young woman like Manvili. When we read the characters of Cavittiri we are reminded of Gray's beautiful lines :

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air"[14]

Cavittiri is also like a gem on earth, but undiscovered in view of her poverty. Though endowed with sharp intellect, natural beauty and all the feminine virtues she is caught in the fetters of poverty and undergoes untold sufferings.

There are some in the world who live wisely even though they have no experience. There are others who profitably make use of the experience of others in the absence of their own experience. Yet there are others who become alert only after some bitter experience. Centamarai in *Centamarai* belongs to the third category. She is a student of Intermediate class. She has a vacillating mind according to the opinions of other characters in the novel. As the saying

goes the burnt child dreads the fire, she becomes wise only after undergoing some bitter experience. Centamarai suffers from two weaknesses. She is easily led away by the face value of things and thus lacks any sense of judgement. This weakness makes her fall in love with an unknown young-man during her college life only to be spoiled and deserted by him. Added to this, her impulsive nature, a weakness generally found in artists, makes her associate herself with a handsome young man Marutappan who is already married. Fascinated by his handsomeness she paints his picture and dreams that she can have him as her spouse. When she learns that he is already married, she is highly disappointed. She herself records her weakness:

> "Among the arts painting seems to be rather dangerous. Any thing seen within a second may fade away slowly in the case of an ordinary person. In the case of an artist it is not so. If I happen to be an ordinary young woman with an ordinary feeling I would not have been much affected. Being a painter I made it (namely the handsome appearance of Marutappan) live in my mind and gave a permanent status to it. That was why I was disappointed and much distressed".[15]

Art no doubt gives us moral instruction as well as delight. When mishandled it entails untold misery. Centamarai, though endowed with artistic talent, suffers from her wrong handling of it. Cantira in *Nencil Oru Mul* is the daughter of a wealthy lady Vijaya. Though modest and patient by nature, the environment in which she lives makes her enamoured of luxury, pomp and splendour. But she marries an ordinary teacher and still leads a life of contentment and peace unlike her elder sister Kintira who involves herself in a life of luxury and in the end perishes for obvious reasons.

2. Spinsters, Love-lorn Maidens and Deserted Women

Among the women characters created by Mu. Va there are spinsters, love-lorn maidens and deserted women. Some have no faith in their future and others on account of reasons

of their own remain permanently unmarried There are a few who are very unfortunate to have been deserted by their husbands. Still there are others who are disappointed in their love adventure and remain spinsters.

Parvati: Among the spinsters Parvati, a B.T. Assistant in the novel *Nencil Oru Mul,* is the only lady who leads a solitary life with a strong mind and good principles. One is led to think that Mu. Va has created this ideas spinster to serve as an example for all others who are destined to lead a life of single-blessedness. Parvati is endowed with natural beauty. In the words of the novelist : " The form of her face was like a portrait painted by an artist. A small fore-head, on arc-like black eye-brows, a proportionately formed nose, coral-like red lips resembling the mouth of a child, apple-like radiant cheeks - all these enhanced her beauty ... A peculiar beauty was also visible in her lime-like yellow physical frame ".[16] When this lady of such a natural beauty as this appears before us in red or saffron-coloured saree, she reminds us of the proverbial Manimekalai of the Tamil epic. Just as Manimekalai had courted an ascetic life and put an end to the institution of harlotry in her family and even in the society of ancient times, Parvati dismisses the idea of marriage and becomes an example of one who extricates hereself from a society which being in hectic pursuit of money advocates dowry system Manimekalai was utterly free from worldiy cares. She adhered to ethical principles, ascetic way of life and put *Amutacurapi*, the divine bowl, which gives perennial supply of food to proper use. Similarly, Parvati takes to the profession of a teacher, the noblest of professions, which gives ample opportunities for social service. She is a spinster in the true sense of the term maintaining celibacy as her only true ornament. Manimekalai with the help of the divine bowl appeases the hunger of millions of the poor people and propagates the principles of Buddhism among them. Parvati as a teacher imparts knowledge and enlightenment to the growing children and dispels their ignorance. Just as Manimekalai preached the principles of extirpation of worldly desires and the principle of mercy or universal love, Parvati preaches the principle of simple life as against the life of luxury wherein

gold ornaments and costly dress find a place. She advocates simplicity and peace to her near and dear friends like Cantira and Vativu and sows the seeds of social reform in them. Some of the principles adopted by Parvati in her own life and the social service which she undertakes in a limited sphere remind us of the great social reformer Florence Nightingale of the West. The salient feature of all her preachings is the quality of restraint which she drives home. The following excerpt from one of her discussions reveals the true picture of her mind :

> "Even in a fertile soil weeds are the common unavoidable vegetation. In the cultivation of such a land weeding operation is the *sine qua non* if good yield is expected. Periodically weeding operation is to be undertaken, because the seeds of weeds are naturally existing in the soil and the presence of dampness naturally leads them to sprout and if neglected, to wild growth. Similarly in man, the human animal, the animal instincts are present. If opportunities are given, these instincts dominate. Even when a person is highly learned and enlightened, these animal instincts do not completely disappear; they are embadded in the cerebro-spinal system of the man. Unless they are properly controlled or sublimated their dominance always will ruin the person."[17]

Prof. Mankaiyark-karaci : Prof. Mankaiyark-karaci, another minor character in *Nencil Oru Mul*, is also a spinster who out of her own experience advocates certain ideas which serve as the eye-opener to many who court spinsterhood. Especially she explains the various dangers and difficulties encountered by young women who entirely depend upon their income and set aside the idea of marriage. Another character who draws our attention to this aspect is also a woman Professor of Tamil who appears in *Alli*. The ideas expressed by this lady make it clear that she is a spinster. The reasons for her remaining a spinster are explained later. The ideas expressed by her seem to echo the balanced views of the author.

"I was also a student like you who studied in a college. I also thought in that age as many of you think. I also thought at that age that I should lead a happy independent life without fear instead of being married and controlled by another person. I am now forty years old. I speak by my own experience. Please hear me Don't give room to such thoughts. You should always have a thought that you should search for a partner and lead a good family life. If it is not possible - if you are unsuccessful in choosing a partner,- you should at that stage have the boldness to lead a life of single-blessedness. Is it proper to take a decision for any one that one should lead a happy life under the shade of a tree because it is difficult to get a house to live in? One should at least think of building a cottage and live in it. Even if it is a remote possibility, then only one should think of living under the shade of a tree ...... Don't get spoiled by thinking about your future in a state of pessimism."[18]

This excerpt forming part of the advice given by that Professor indicates various conflicts that arise in the life of spinsters. Women, who inhibit their emotions and drive out of fear of conflicts in their young age, have to regret at the age of forty when the repercussions of their early inhibitions are felt. The age of forty in one's life is a period when one should be extraordinarily cautious. What has been stated by the woman psychologist Elizabeth B. Hurlock draws our attention and careful consideration in this context.

"Forty has been described as the 'dangerous age'; it can be dangerous for several reasons. At this age, many persons develop a desire or have an urge to stray from the beaten path in more ways than one. They seem to sense or fear that the tide of the life may ebb and they want to take a last fling at new experiences; youth in the opposite sex and flattery seem attractive. This is the age at which persons of stable character remain "hitched".[19]

Therefore, the novelist's reference to the age of the woman Professor is deliberate and meaningful.

It looks as if it is somewhat difficult to find suitable bride-grooms for educated girls in our country. It is a pity that in spite of the knowledge and enlightenment they attain through education, they sometimes miserably fail in their marital life. The best example of this state of affairs is to be found in the life of Dr. Parameswari in *Alli.* Dr. Parameswari is a medical graduate. She possesses persuasive power in abundance and has clear views about life. But she too is a frustrated woman in love affairs. She is one who is deserted by her classmate Ulakanatan in the Medical College whom she loved. Disappointed as she is, she always looks upon men as a class of deceitful nature. As she sets out with this pre-conceived notion about men she fails to find out a faithful mate for herself. She is of the view that any marriage should be based on understanding. The society according to her should permit free movement of men and women before they get married. This enables them to understand each other properly.

Every woman, as we know, wants to lead a really smooth family life with a good spouse. It is also her desire to enjoy the wedded bliss, beget children, rear them properly and be an ideal housewife of that family. But in the life of a few women this legitimate ambition is not fulfilled at all. In the case of few a women their wedded life is so precarious that our eyes even shun to have the sight of it. Mu. Va portrays the life of a few characters in his novels as life he wants to show the life of a few disappointed women in true colours. Of these, Malarvili in *Malarvili* and Geetha in *Nencil Oru Mul* are the best examples.

Malar-vili.:

A special attraction in her glance and speech, an ability to execute her plans with clear head and understanding, innocent looks and unalloyed mind are some of the characteristic features and qualities of Malar-vili in *Malar-vili.* We see in the novel that many are attracted by her graceful personality and her intellectual traits. But the family life of this girl for all her accomplishments is an utter failure. We see Malar-

vili who was once trotting like a carefree gazelle is now "cribbed cabined and confined" like a parrot in a cage.

The novelist reads some of the traits of Kannaki of *Cilap-patikaram* into the character of Malar-vili. Ilankovatikal, the author of *Cilappatikaram* did not show at any place Kannaki finding fault with Kovalan when the latter left the former for the sake of pleasure with Matavi. Similarly, Mu. Va did not show Malar-vili finding fault with her husband Nakanatan who is in liason with Kancanai, wife of Collector Celvanayakam. This leads us to think that Mu. Va has followed the foot steps of Ilankovatikal in matters of the creation of this character. Besides this we have also to consider whether it is fault on the part of Malar-vili to refrain from exercising that kind of legitimate freedom which Tolkappiyar in his masterly treatise advocates.[20] When a husband treads the path of immorality is it not the right of his wife to admonish him? Is it the fault of Malar-vili who has not exercised her freedom to admonish her spouse? Her failure to do so may be attributed to her meekness or want of courage and also her anticipation of dire consequences We may adduce two reasons for her fault. One is that Malar-vili is more or less a slave to the love of Celvanayakam. If she finds fault with Kancanai or Nakanatan it may amount to injuring one (Celvanayakam) who has showered affection on her or soiling his fair name. Another reason is that her marital bliss is likely to be affected if her husband comes to know that she is aware of his undesirable ways or for that matter if he dares to continue them. We are moved by the pathetic and deserted condition of Malar-vili after the death of her husband Nakanatan. Geetha in *Nencil Oru Mul* is also a woman deserted by her paramour. Standing before Vativu with a child in her arms, Geetha represents the pathetic condition of hundreds of orphan girls placed in similar positions.

3. Housewives

"A virtuous wife is declared to be blessing in a household."[21] says Valluvar. If a man is fortunate enough to secure a good and accomplished wife, he is credited with

tremendous success because the glory of the house-hold is in the hands of the wife. Some people like to have beautiful girls for their wives. Some other opt for girls with intellectual traits. Still others prefer girls endowed with beauty and intellect. There are still others who are ambitious enongh to aspire for girls who have wealth and virtue in addition to beauty and intellect But Mu. Va emphasises more than in one place the quality of flexibility in girls besides all those qualittes mentioned above. He points out many wives who fail in their life for want of flexibility even though they are endowed with virtue, beauty, intellect and wealth. He also points out in many places that women should conduct themselves according to the will of their husbands, if they want to lead a successful life.

> "Mind only is life. Women deceive themselves even though endowed with beauty, ability and other amiable qualities and suffer as they do not know how to give happiness to their husbands without knowing their minds. But those endowed less with such qualities are successful in life as they know how to conduct themselves according to the wishes of their husband."[22]

> "One should have a sacrificing frame of mind in the family life. Both husband and wife should be flexible to each other One may have certain defects. But the other should show love transcending all those defects At opportune moment the defects may be pointed out and rectified. Some times the other may fight for the sake of rectifying those defects."[23]

We can classify wives created by the novelist into two categories on the basis of their age. They are young wives and middle aged wives. Mu. Va describes vividly the family life of the wives belonging to the first category; Kayarkanni, Karpakam, Manimekalai and Vani (all in Akal-vilakku); Punkoti and Cutarvili in *Vata-Malar* and Nirmala in *Karit-tuntu* can be cited as examples of the first category. Those young girls who have newly entered into family life have no experience. They have no clarity of vision. They are not clear

enough whether it would be better to lead a life submitting themselves to their husbands or lead a life with independent spirit. The author points out that many young wives undergo such struggles in their minds through Karpakam, Kayarkanni and Manimekalai (all in *Akal-vilakku*). Karpakam is a young wife endowed with intellect, clarity of wisdom and beauty. She is truthful and straigtforward. Though endowed with all these qualities she suffers from a peculiar flaw. She feels proud of her own virtues and pooh-poohs the loop-holes of her husband. We see her deriving peculiar delight out of thinking that she is virtuous and her husband is given to dissolute ways. As she cannot mend the ways of her husband, she shows less love and affection for him. We also find her obstinate. For want of love and persuasive power she fails to mend her spouse, and so runs away to her mother's house. Velayyan's wife Kayarkanni is also a lovely and affectionate woman. Lack of flexibility in her makes her fail in life in the beginning. But she learns from Velayyan who is a man of high culture gradually the sense of flexibility. Velayyan's sister Manimekalai was like a free bird in her mother's house where she had no chance of learning what poverty is. But her husband who is an elementary school teacher and a follower of Gandhian principles, plans a simple and unostentatious life according to his meagre income. Though his wife Manimekalai struggles at first to adapt herself to the environment, she gradually learns to get used to the simple life of her husband and thus proves herself to be a successful housewife.

Of all the housewives created by Mu. Va Cutar-vili in *Vata–malar* seems to be the best The novelist shows all the good and enviable qualities of an ideal wife through Cutarvili. His ideas of what an ideal honsewife should possess are reflected in Cutarvili. The following words of Cutar-vili addressed to Punkoti are self-explanatory.

> "There are millions of women without gold and diamond ornaments. One can lead a healthy life without those ornaments. Luxury breeds worries and anxiety. If we fall in line with the millions who lead a simple life, there will not be worry for ever. It is

sufficient to maintain the natural beauty of the body. Thus she (Cutarvili) speaks many things. She does not like the false prestige which one tries to have by lowering the prestige of others".[24]

Family life becomes smooth if it is planned according to the wishes of both husband and wife. Want of mutual understanding leads to unending struggles. Cutarvili realizes all these and leaves everything to the wishes of her husband. The novelist wants to drive home a universal truth about family life. According to him wife can follow her husband blindly provided the latter is affectionate and treads on righteous path. Punkoti, the wife of Kulantaivel in the same novel, is quite opposite to the ways of Cutarvili. She is a lover of luxurious and ostentatious life. We cannot throw any blame on her for being so, because the environment in which she was brought up in her mother's house is to blame. A pampered girl that she is, she has no chance of cultivating healthy attitude to life. She expects equality with her husband in matters of rights. She is obstinate in maintaining that whatever she thinks is proper. As Kulantaivel is a man of robust common sense and affection, his wife mends her ways in due course.

Nirmala in *Karit-tuntu* accepts the artist Mokan as her husband as she is enamoured of his talent and the income he derives out of it. As the saying goes 'Familiarity breeds contempt', there arises a breach in their family life in due course. In Nirmala's life we observe two different phases. One is her life with artist Mokan and the other with Prof. Kamalak-kannar. While leading a family life at Calcutta with artist Mokan as her husband Nirmala holds a fallacious view that the feminine virtue consists in her body, dress, ornaments and beauty. She thinks that she should achieve social status in a civilized world by making use of her family as a ladder. She respects pomp and splendour in life. She is completely ignorant of what sacrifice is. As she leads her life at Madras with Prof. Kamalak-kannar as her husband, she realises that beauty of mind is more necessary than the beauty of the body. She thus acquires the complete perspective of

life. Born in Calcutta and bred in the luxurious environment of that city, and educated in a famous college which is based on western civilization, Nirmala spent most of her time in the company of women who are ignorant of the greatness of virtue. Only after becoming the spouse of Prof. Kamalak-kannar at Madras she studies *Tirukkural* which completely metamorphoses her attitude and mind. She lives with Prof. Kamalak-kannar as a lovely and beautiful wife.

It so happens in life that sometimes immoral women become wives of good and virtuous men and vice versa. Valli is free from any blemish. She conducts herself according to the wishes of her husband. But she suffers a lot because of the vagaries of her husband. She endures all his idiosyncrasies but in the end she commits suicide. Thus the young housewives belonging to the first category may be said to be in the primary classes in the school of family life. They are only on the verge of learning the household art. They are like children who are terrified and flabbergasted at the sight of the teachers and new comrades. Some among them pass the examination of household art even at the very first attempt and some other fail in the first attempt and pass in the second.

We can include in the second category Revati, Mankai-nallal in *Man-kuticai*, Mankaiyar-karaci and Kamalam in *Pavai*, Kalaivalli in *Malar-vili*; Naku, Kuntamma, Ponni in *Karit-tuntu*, Kotai in *Kallo? Kaviyamo?*, Kunamalai in *Anta-nal* and Cornam in *Kayamai*. Revati in *Man-kuticai* is a woman of sense of honour. She knows that her husband is not a criminal. But influenced by the judgement convicting her husband as a criminal she hates him. She discards him as her sense of honour has been affected by his wily conduct. When her husband returns home after undergoing the punishment for a crime which he has not committed she does not extend a warm welcome but instead; she disrespects him and even hates him. She is enamoured of luxury. But she is free from pretentions. She does not like to lead the life of a hypocrite like other women. Mankai-nallal in the same novel is a woman who conducts herself according to the wishes of her husband. Her husband cherishes the following opinion about

her: "She is not only a wife to me but a minister, a physician, a psychiatrist, a secretary and a teacher".[25] Mankaiyarkaraci in *Pavai* though essentially a good lady, lacks sense of discrimination. She fails invariably to distinguish the good from the bad and also remains indifferent to them. We can visualise the complete picture of her from what her husband has said about her in one context:

> "As young children recite the hymns in *Tiruppukal* and students in the lower classes repeat the grammatical rules, she leads a blind life. She sees people in the neighbourhood marrying and so she gets married. She witnesses people cooking food for their husbands and so she cooks for me. People in the neighbourhood converse with their husbands and she does so with me. She sees people in the neighbourhood rearing children by inflicting punishment or patting them. She too does the same thing for her children .. ".[26]

Thus the family life of Mankaiyark-karaci becomes a mechanical one. Being a simpleton she fails to cater to the tastes of her husband. Kamalam is a character in the same novel. Having completed her S.S.L.C., she keeps reading the biographies of great men. Her acquaintance with educated people has improved her knowledge and conduct. So she proves herself to be a successful housewife.

The weather-beaten red-coloured saree and dirt-ridden blue blouse go to make the rags in which Ponni is clad. Her hair is dishevelled and soiled for want of oil. Despite the disturbed and unattractive vermillion on the forehead and discolouration of her teeth by constant chewing of *pan-cupari*, her face expresses her youthfulness and unalloyed looks. Though she has a well-built body her gait is clumsy. These are the few features that form the description of Ponni in *Karit-tuntu* She is adopted by the lame artist Mokan as his second wife. They live in a small poor hut and have neither proper clothes to wear nor wholesome food to eat. Ponni leads a family life out of the meagre income earned by odd kinds of job. Her life is full of peace and love, a life respecting her

own sentiments but unmindful of the outside world Her family life, though uncivilised and poverty-stricken, is one of contentment. Kuntamma in the same novel represents millions of women of our country living in huts. Her life shows that all her difficulties spring from poverty. Though she suffers from acute poverty she leads an honest and loyal life. The way in which she conduct herself when the lame artist Mokan tries to molest her in the absence of her husband shows her high sense of chastity. Naku in the same novel is a housewife belonging to a middle-class family. Like the women of old days she is an adept in the house-hold art and matters of frugality. She pays her attention only to the welfare of her husband and children at the expense of even her own needs and health. She represents an ideal housewife of the ancient days and her life is one of sacrifice. Marutappan's wife in *Centamarai*, Kalaivalli in *Malar-vili*, Cornam in *Kayamai*, Kotai in *Kallo? Kaviyamo?* are the immortal and typical representatives of the families of the ancient days in that they put up with the dull, dreary and monotonous routine work and drudge throughout for the welfare of the family and thus display sacrificial quality.

Nowadays parents select spouses for their sons and daughters on the basis of names, horoscope, age, physical and financial conditions. But they do not in many cases take into account the attitudes of people towards life and their abilities for adjustments. This mistake in many cases has landed many families into trouble. Kunamalai in *Anta-nal* is a lady who suffers from the maladjustment of her husband. She always expects love and affection from her husband who never cares for her and even detests her. Their family life is an utter failure, because their marriage is the result of the force of her parents and her kith and kin. Thus women falling under the second category are all well experienced knowing the ins and outs of family life.

4. Mothers

Gandhiji once has observed that every home is a university and the parents are the teachers. The central figure of

that University is the mother. In this century the responsibility of a mother is not restricted only to giving birth to progeny as it has been stated by an ancient Tamil poet,[27] but also to playing dominant role in moulding the personalities of children. The mothers in families have to shape their children in such a responsible way that they may become good citizens, efficient administrators and statesmen, men of courage and fortitude to man the military, and eminent scientists in whose hands rests the development of the country. In short, we can boldly state that the future of the developing nation revolves around mothers. Psychologically the affection of a mother in rearing children is the *sine qua non*. The novelist explains that those children who were unfortunate in losing the affection of their mother are driven to frustration and may become rogues, criminals and anti-social elements.

> " If there is no affectionate environment one cannot expect a natural development of the mind. One can develop love in the children only if they are shown affection. Young mind without the chance of tasting affection cannot develop itself on the path of love. If love is denied to a child and thus the child is driven to disappointment, it is but natural that hatred, crookedness and violence may be instilled in the young mind."[28]

Though mothers created by Mu Va in his novels have no conception of developing an ideal society we can see abundant motherly affection in them. We can also see in the novels that the novelist delineates all the special characteristics, though indirectly in Tamil mothers.

Ponmuti in *Anta-nal* is a significant character among mothers created by Mu. Va. She is the mother of the revolutionary Vani. Her empirical learning of current politics and social problems through her husband enlarges and enlightens her mind. She has the chance of witnessing many gruesome scenes of World War II when she has to return from Burma to India on foot with her daughter Vani. This gives another chance to widen her mental horizon. Her affection for her daughter develops later into love of humanity.

In this sense she can be compared with the character of Mother in the world-famous novel entitled *Mother* by Maxim Gorky. Ponmuti takes more pride in her daughter's imprisonment caused by her social service than in her being wedded to a youngman and getting good children.

> "Our past life was for the sake of the family. That family life is dead and gone. The present life is for the sake of society–for the nation. I chose this kind of life only willingly......But my daughter has made a hop-step-and-jump in the service... she has become the primary cause for finding a New Movement just to make the world awake and be alert".[29]

This is the excerpt of the statement made by Ponmuti with supreme satisfaction and pride at the end of the novel. One can perceive the extraordinary motherly affection in Cantiran's mother in *Akal-vilakku,* in the mother of Palani in *Pavai,* in Minaksi, the mother of Kulantaivel in *Vatamalar,* in Annamma the mother of Arulappar in *Kallo? Kaviyamo?* Cantiran's mother dies when she hears the news that Cantiran has played a truant at college Ignoring even the dominating attitude of her daughter-in-law Minaksi Ammal decides to be away from her dear son with a view that her son should lead a happy and contented family life with his newly-wedded wife. Annamma shows her green signal to her son to marry her servant maid Mankai just to fulfil his desire to marry a girl of his own choice. She even ignores the social status, wealth snd other factors which are prevalent. Many mothers who figure in Mu Va's novels, live for the welfare of their offspring and thus show a spirit of self-sacrifice.

5. Widows

Widowhood is the most agonising condition in the life of women. It becomes more pathetic if they lose their husbands in their very young age. In Indian society the status of widows is very precarious. The society treats them with utmost contempt and disrespect. If a woman loses her husband she is treated as someone worse than an animal. Whatever

may be the reasons for the husband's death, the society throws the whole blame on her stars and horoscope. Further the society ostracizes her on all happy and auspicious occasions. Many social reformers like Rajaram Mohan Roy in the North and Periyar E V. Ramaswamy Naikar in the South have throughout their life carried out propaganda for raising the status of widows condemning the superstitious belief of the society. In spite of their life-long social service and propoganda and instilling progressive views in the society, there seems to be no improvement in the status of widows. The world has not thought of any permanent way of improving their status. This being so, the natural urges and instinctive drives are killing their lives inch by inch. If a woman who is enjoying the peak of her wedded bliss suddenly loses her husband, she has to undergo many mental conflicts. Even if her mind soars high to adopt the highest ethical principles, her body is still on the ground undergoing all the trials and temptations due to subversion of all her physical desires and instinctive urges. It is but natural that some of the widows are forced to deviate from their moral code. Even if some of them desire or opt for remarriage the society pooh poohs their ideas and laughs at them. So they are forced to have their pleasure by clandestine means. This tendency of the widows leads to many social evils which is out of context here to dilate upon. Mu. Va is always desirous of finding a permanent solution to their problems. He creates two widows in his novels who seem to represent thousands of widows in Tamilnadu.

Pakkiam Ammaiyar :

Pakkiam Ammaiyar in *Akal-vilakku* is endowed by nature with a well-built body and a soft heart. Her broad forehead and her sparkling eyes add glamour to her beautiful face. She evokes our sympathy when she becomes a widow and experiences continuous mental agony throughout her life. Had she been fortunate, she would have become the head of an ideal family and the mother of several children. The period of her youth bubbling with emotion and love has become a waste, as she has been destined to undergo untold

mental agony. Be that as it may, she showers all her motherly affection on Velayyan and his sister Manimekalai and thus derives some sort of solace. Even though she becomes a widow at an early age, she displays an amazingly abundant and rich experience of family life. Her advice and admonitions given to the recently married Manimekalai and Karpakam whenever they complained to her about the defects and mistakes of their husbands, show her deep intelligence and high culture. She instils in their minds the value and importance of give-and-take attitude: "If one does not possess patience and give-and-take attitude no one can succeed in the family life. Those who desire for love marriages must have this patience and give-and-take attitude".[30] If patience and the spirit of give-and-take are to be inculcated in women, they should read books written by great men. Pakkiam Ammaiyar who has read Gandhiji's *My Experiments with Truth*, Tiru. Vi. Ka's *Pennin Perumai* (Greatness of Womanhood) the hymens of Tayumanavar, *Tirukkural* and *Cilappatikaram* explains how these books lend a helping hand in the day-to-day life. With a little school education the lady has learnt about many books of this kind and has attained clearness of mind and clarity of vision about men and matters. Bearing in mind the conduct of Kovalan of *Cilappatikaram*, Kayarkanni asks Pakkiam Ammaiyar why the world does not tolerate the misconduct of women while it tolerates that of men. The sane and suitable reply of Pakkiyam Ammaiyar clearly reveals the state of maturity she has attained at the highest level.[31] Though a widow, she serves as a beaçon-light for many family women in their day-to-day life. Karpakam Kayakanni and Manimekalai who happen to expose themselves to the influence of Pakkiam Ammaiyar manage to solve many intricate problems in their family life and lead good family life without involving themselves in petty family quarrels.

The author has not failed to point out that this lady with rich experience and moral calibre is not without faults. The intimacy between a young widow like Pakkiam Ammaiyar and a teenager like Cantiran appears to be undesirable. The following statement of Velayyan lends support to this:

"On our way to school in the morning and on our return to home in the evening Pakkiyam Ammaiyar used to smile by seeing us. In due course the affection that was shown grew more on Cantiran. Sometimes in the evenings she used to invite both of us and go on speaking for hours together. During her talk her sight was always directed towards Cantiran. I used to intervene myself rather forcibly and participate in the talk. Sometimes she used to sit near Cantiran; in the course of her talk she used to comb his hair with her fingers, pat him on his cheek or pinch it; on certain occasions she used to take his palm and put it on her own. It seemed by all her actions of this kind that she had ignored me totally. If anybody had moved with Cantiran in such a manner I would not have worried myself. But it pained me much because a lady who has endeared herself to me from my childhood had now completely ignored me showing all her affection towards another person."[32]

We cannot form any bad opinion about Pakkiyam Ammaiyar even from this statement because it gives only a picture of her outward actions and does not throw any light on the motives. But the motives of the author in describing the following episode seem to be curious. This episode centres round Cantiran himself. During his examination times Cantiran uses to study by staying day and night in the house of Pakkiyam Ammaiyar. One day he abruptly leaves her house and starts studying in his own house. When Velayyan asks him why he suddenly returned home his reply is that his house is more convenient than the other.[33] He has not openly stated what has taken place in the house of Pakkiyam Ammaiyar. But from his reply we feel like suspecting that some untoward thing might have taken place. However, from Imavati's talk to Velayyan we understand that Cantiran had confided to her something about what had taken place in Pakkiyam Ammaiyar's house.

"I was told that she (Pakkiam Ammaiayar) was endowed with beauty and intelligence. She has lost her husband at her very young age. She moved with much affection with Cantiran who also responded as if he

> moved with his mother. At last Cantiran came to know that she had some ulterior motive under this cover of affection."[34]

This statement of Imavati creates some blemish in the character of Pakkiyam Ammaiyar. It is not known definitely whether she had moved with him like a mother or with some dark motive. But one can say that she, being a widow of thirties, might have restricted her free movement with Cantiran. The readers of D.H. Lawrence's Novel *Sons and Lovers* know that Gertrude Morel is a character ignored completely by her husband and so could not find any kind of love in him; but derived all her love from her son Paul. The critics of English novels interpret this son-mother relationship in terms of the *Oedipus complex*. It was Freud who drew our attention to the concept of the *Oedipus complex* and showed it as a universal condition[35] We too can interpret the Pakkiyam-Cantiran relationship in terms of *Oedipus complex*

Inpavalli :

Inpavalli in *Alli* is a young lady who has studied upto Intermediate class. Her husband is a B.T. Assistant in a High School They beget two children who later die unfortunately. Inpavalli who has been affected already by the loss of her children is destined to suffer from another tragic blow. Her husband dies after a long suffering from tuberculosis. She prays all the gods under the sun for her husband's life. But the hands of Death take away the life of her husband and she becomes a widow. One can only sympathise with her for she is poor and cannot bear the agony of others and she considers her husband as the only God on earth

As a widow she leads an ideal life. Whatever she eats, she eats it only after placing it before the portrait of her husband. She teaches young children and manufactures *agarbathies* to earn for her livelihood. Inspite of her simple life a conflict arises in her mind. As the novelist has said :

> "The attraction between men and women is the law of nature. The body is ready to put that law into

action. The mind formulates many principles and prevents the action of the body. Here, there is a conflict between the mind and the body. This conflict is found in knaves as well as in pious persons. The knaves fall an easy prey to the law of Nature. But the pious persons by the strength of the will-power by their strong faith in ethical codes, carry on the struggle with Nature and ultimately succeed in their struggle."[36]

We see that Inpavalli is affected by such a struggle as this in her life. When Aravali suffers from an ailment there arises an opportunity for her to nurse him. Her free movement with him and her frequent chances of touching his body give her some sort of thrill which makes her entertain the idea of marrying Aravali. The excerpts of her letter to Alli reveal her mental conflict:

"When Aravali came to us and fell ill, you did service; I also did some service to him. But you were strong enough to control your mind but when I did service solitarily for many days I have given my heart to him...Don't misunderstand me. Think that I was not possessed of a strong mind and show me some sympathy. So far I had a determination to carry on my life with single-blessedness. But please convey to him (Arəvali) that his high culture had moved me to such an extent that I have determined to spend the rest of life in serving him. This much a woman could convey with some modesty."[37]

The novelist is able to portray the power of 'sex-drive' in a woman who leads a simple and unostentatious life.

6. Women with Worldly Knowledge

Vijaya:

It is a matter of commonsense that the way of the world is to laugh at and look down upon those whose private life in detail is known to the public. If some of the details

happen to be of bad taste the effect will be the worst. Bearing this in mind, certain good people by their intelligence and influence try to live for the welfare of the others. But these people in their attempt to save those who are in trouble often involve themselves in the struggle and end their life in it. At that time their intelligence and ability to act are over-powered by love and affection. Vijaya in *Nencil Oru Mul* is a character endowed with these noble qualities. She is a North Indian settled in Tamil Nadu. She knows the ins and outs of the wicked nature prevailing in certain sections of society. Being a rich lady she knows the value of money and the influence it can command in society. Though an ordinary woman, not much educated, she knows how to make money and save it. In this respect she equals any man if not excels. We can glimpse at her capacity from the words of her taxi driver who on one occasion says :

> "She is an able woman. Nobody can be equal to her in the matter of her worldly wisdom and in her ability to get on in the world." [38]

She is a wealthy lady and shows great deal of culture. She follows worldly wisdom in hiding certain facts of her past life with the intention of living successful wedded life. No doubt she respects the high sense of morality; but on that account she does not think that it should be respected as the '*dharma*' absolute She thinks that one can even swerve from the right path sometimes in order to attain a happy and good end. She possesses rich experience in the family life. She has understood the intricate workings of men's mind. A few of her utterances in different contexts make us understand her rich experience.'

> "Men understand how to treat women only when they have grown old. When they are young, commands and controls dominate in their treatment." [39]

* * *

> "Ninety per cent of men suffer from one bad habit or other. One should not make a fuss of it. That one defect should be ignored or condomned". [40]

* * *

"If a woman finds a bad habit in her husband she should hate the bad habit but not her husband. Bad habits are to be hated but not the person who is possessed of them".[41]

Among the women characters created by Mu. Va we cannot come across any women like Vijaya who has understood the trend of the world and the importance of money. Through the character of Vijaya the novelist administers a stern warning to the women of this century and advises them how they should conduct themselves in life. This can be understood from the statement of Vijaya made in different contexts :

"One can command respect if one possesses money in abundance. Other things follow money step by step. Even a bad husband will prove himself to be a good person provided he is in possession of large amount of money. Money is the only criterion to assess any one at first You know that Bernard Shaw has made mention of it in that way. According to him the biggest crime is to be poor.[42]

It is always good for young men who have no economic independence to refrain from indulging in love affairs for sometime. The novelist who emphasises this point in many places emphasises it through Vijaya also.

"I do not believe that one should marry for the sake of love alone. I will always advise nubile young girls to marry a young man only after testing whether he has money and possesses ability to lead a life without depending on others and whether he possesses any sense of responsibility in him. Man's love and affection without money and the ability to pull on is practically of no use. That kind of love does not deserve any praise."[43]

One should not think that Vijaya is a lady who does not like the life of luxury. She thinks that luxury is necessary in the day-to-day life. Her concept of luxury consists in wearing good dress, in eating nutritious food and in living in a

comfortable and well-furnished abode. She thinks that such a luxurious life will be conducive both to body and mind. But she does not like to squander money over a single day function.

> "I do not like to spend money lavishly on a day's marriage. Money will be wasted criminally in it. Any thing one can afford to waste, but one should not waste money. Money is the only thing which infuses strength into worldly life".[44]

This is a piece of advice given to Vativu at the time of her marriage. But the last days of an accomplished lady like Vijaya end tragically. The reason for her tragic end is that she has failed to inculcate in her eldest daughter Kintira the moral codes as she labours all the while under the notion that money is the only *sine qua non* of life. The reckless life of Kintira has affected the life of Vijaya. The following statement of Vativu beautifully sums up the merits and demerits of the character of Vijaya.

> "One's capacity is not useful for the members of one's family as it is useful to others. Generally we can witness this trend everywhere. This has become cent per cent true in the family of that lady (Vijaya). The capacity of an efficient physician is not generally useful for the children of his family. The legal acumen of an advocate is also not useful for his family litigation. Wherever emotion and affection dominate and move forward there intelligence and ability are retarded and get a set-back",[45]

7. Odious Women

Mu. Va, who has created women of high principles, beautiful wives and affectionate mothers, has also created women of odious nature. In his novels he points out certain women who are the embodiment of love and divinity and are by force of circumstances reduced to ordinary women. These are enamoured of money and silken dress. A few who have

no other means of earning their livelihood sell their bodies to pleasure-seeking youngmen. A few others whose sexual appetite has not been appeased by their husbands perhaps because of their physical and mental incompatibility, deviate from their righteous path by courting those who satisfy their desire. Thus we come across many types of amorous women in his novels. When he refers to them the novelist says :

> "All trees in the wood cannot be made use of as door-frames, doors and roof-rafters. Only certain trees can be made use of for building a house. Other trees are destined to dry in the hot sun or to be burnt in the fire and become reduced to charcoal or ashes. All women cannot afford to become dutiful and truthful housewives and shine like family deities. Only a few can become dutiful wives with rigorous moral code; a few only can become affectionate mothers; the remaining women are destined to be trapped by lascivious men and scorched in the lust of fire".[46]

In Mu. Va's novels though there are many amorous women, they play different roles. Vaceekaram in *Kayamai* can be cited as a good instance of this type of women. As her name itself implies, she exerts her magical influence and succeeds in obtaining of the objects her desire. By the influence of her allurement even such rude persons as Anavar are tamed and made to dance according to her bewitching smile and sweet speech. Even her formidable enemy Cakayn who contemplates wreaking of vengeance upon her, at last succumbs to her bewitching beauty. Inspite of all these bad traits she is a very beautiful woman. The novelist describes her physical beauty as follows :

> "........She is endowed with a body as soft as rose.....As she was born in a family which has not seen poverty at any time, charm and grace were the dominating characteristics of her body......Even in her walk and talk one can perceive the pride and arrogance generally seen in the young children of affluent family...... She is an adept in her art of expressing one thing totally different from the idea in her mind".[47]

Her beautiful form and the appearance of her body are really the intoxicants to many youngmen who are susceptible to them.

The very thought that Anavar is in her hands, makes her adopt an arrogant attitude to her co-workers in the office. She never entertains the idea of marriage. The idea of becoming a good housewife is of no appeal to her. She takes immense pleasure in mixing with young men one after another. In the course of her conversation, when Anavar makes a reference to the idea of her getting married, her ready reply is: "If I had such a desire I would have married any one long before".[48] This reply exposes what is in the innermost recesses of her heart. Within no time do we realise that her reckless and licentious career bears dire consequences for her. Even today there are some young women like Vaceekaram whose tragic end teaches a lesson to others.

The characteristics of Vaceekaram promote the development of the story in *Kayamai* in many ways. It is a scientific truth that hydrogen and oxygen chemically combine in suitable proportions at some optimum temperature to form water. Similarly the arrogance of Anavar and the beauty and the attractive features of Vaceekaram combine under peculiar circumstances and social conditions so as to serve as the genesis and the complete development of the story in *Kayamai*. Her first appearance in the novel gives a life and thrill to it and her tragic end leads to many turns of events in the story.

Another character, Caralampal, in the same novel is the concubine of Kanakalinkam, the intimate friend of Anavar. Though a permanent concubine of Kanakalinkam, it is her characteristic feature to extend her invitation to other lascivious persons as circumstances demand. The best evidence of this is that she entertains Anavar when Kanakalinkam is away from station. The novelist points out through the character of Ammu in the same novel that there are certain women who pose themselves as social reformers achieve some titles and positions which they do not deserve. They pretend to do some service to the country as well as to

the uplift of women while they lead a life of immorality. There are certain women deserted by their husbands; they have no other way to eke out their living except by selling their bodies. These women who have neither education nor any other talents become the targets of sexual appetite of men and appease their carnal thirst. One such woman is the servant-maid in the house of Syamala in *Alli*. Deserted by her husband she becomes the servant-maid of a rich prostitute Syamala and thus ruins her own life. " Who will know the difficulty of finding a job except I? I have tried my best to go in for a job at some other place giving up the present one. Who will give it to me when I require it?"[49] - This is how once she expresses her difficulty in seeking a job for herself. One can presume that it is not only the question posed by the servant-maid but also the challenge thrown by the author to the society. Similarly Kokilam in *Malar-vili* turns into a prostitute by force of circumstances. Her acute poverty leads her to prostitution and the author points out this through Muttayyan.[50]

It is a point to be borne in mind that many of the odious women characters created by Mu. Va hail from families. Many among them are those who are disappointed in their family life with their husbands and are involved in evil ways and are not able to free themselves from that mire. Perhaps it is their fate to continue the same ways of life. It may be the author's intention to drive home the truth into the minds of the readers that sexual compatibility between husband and wife is the backbone of a successful family life. The eminent physician, Dr. N. Banerjee, also observes the same truth as follows: " A satisfactory sex life is established to be the most important factor for normal development and functioning of a healthy family life. Sexual disorders, however minor, lead to frustration, worry and stress and have a serious impact on the life and happiness of a couple. The atmosphere in the house becomes gloomy and irritable with mistrust causing frequent clashes between the spouses."[51] Mu. Va has shown in his novels that the physical incompatibility of a couple definitely ruins many families. He himself points out that a lack of virility in men is the primary cause for

driving their spouses to immoral ways. " To fortify the mind of a woman living with her husband who has no virility is like driving of a cart with single bullock by a man without hands,"[52] says the author. Kancanai in *Malar-vili*, and the wife of the Head-clerk in the Collector office who enticed and spoiled Annamalai, in the same novel,[53] Cakacambal in *Perramanam* may be cited as standing instances of this type of women

Kancanai :

She is a character in *Malar-vili.* Naturally endowed with intelligence beauty and aesthetic sense, somehow she becomes the wife of Celvanayakam. The author at the beginning of the novel introduces her through the portraits and paintings done by her and thereby points out her artistic trait. The beautiful pictures bearing the apt quotations from Cankam lyrics and also from poems of *Cilappatikaram* make us believe that those pictures represent the ideal family of Kancanai and Celvanayakam. We also come across the living person of Kancanai through the vision of Muttayya when he describes her as follows :

> " Her (Kancanai) pure white robes and ear-stud made up of diamonds with modern cuts reminded Kalaimakal the Goddess of learning. Even her face was beaming with such an intelligence. Though aged thirty five, her body was bubbling with youthful beauty. She was naturally endowed with the softness of her body which the women of the western countries preserve with artificial make-up. One cannot but appreciate how she was naturally endowed with the optimum flesh required for her physical frame when one happens to see her."[54]

At the end of the story our sympathy is shown to her when we probe into the reason for the ruin of such a character with beauty, intelligence and aeshetic taste and high status. For this sort of tragic death of Kancanai we can state three reasons. First, her inordinate love of art makes her forget her duty and family responsibility. She recklessly spends her

time in going with Nakanatan to picture-houses and meetings. Unfortunately, she does not possess the power to control her exuberant emotions. Therefore she commits the greatest mistake of developing illicit relation with a young man and ignores for a moment the fact that she is actually ruining the family life of a young girl Malar-vili. Had she sharpened her art with some ethical code like her husband Collector Celvanayakam, she would not have succumbed to her emotion. The novelist points out her mistake rather beautifully, in the following excerpt.

> "To bring the mind of other people under control is like controlling an ordinary horse. But to bring the mind of an artist under control is like controlling the horse that had drunk arrack".[55]

This statement of the author is a sound explanation for the exuberant enthusiasm of Kancanai for art. Be that as it may, it does not seem to be proper to throw all the blame on Kancanai only. It seems to be better in this case to take into account certain other factors that are responsible for her going astray. It has been already pointed out that she has a physical frame beaming with youthfulness and beauty. Now this lady became the wife of Celvanayakam who is impotent. Once we take this fact into consideration, it becomes difficult for us to blame either of these characters. Is it the fault of Collector Celvanayakam who had dissipated his virility by his excessive indulgence in dissolute ways in his youth? Or is it the fault of Kancanai who fails to reconcile to the situation and opt for a life of abstinence? Or can we blame Fate or Providence that had brought about the union of both? As human beings are endowed with free-will and intellect we are ultimately forced to blame Kancanai and Celvanayakam only. Secondly, Kancanai's inordinate love of luxurious life may be the cause of her ruin. If she had led a life of simplicity like Celvanayakam her end might have been otherwise. "That Madam had some fascination for luxurious life. She also attached some importance to money".[56] This statement of Malaikkannar serves as an evidence. However, in addition to her tendency to go in for a luxurious life, her husband starts

spending lavishly his earnings in the name of philanthrophy and hence the drain on their purse.

These circumstances make her entertain the idea of doing some business by way of earning more money and she uses Nakanathan for this purpose. Business transactions create a congenial atmosphere for the gradual growth of intimacy between the two who indulge in frequent outings on this pretext. Thus, she swerves from the path of chastity and though she sets out with the intention of earning money through business she ultimately involves herself in heavy debts. Inspite of all these circumstances we somehow hesitate to throw the cntire blame on Kancanai especially when we bear in mind the fact that she has been given to frugality throughout. One may think that Kancanai might have led a peaceful and contented life with the income of Celvanayakam. But Kancanai has her own grounds for the justification of her stand.

> "I do not suffer from any greed for money. My husband's salary is not sufficient to run the family. That is why my mind is inclined towards business. Even small provision shop-keepers and hoteliers earn thousands of rupees in a month. We get only seven hundred rupees per month. We want to maintain the utmost economy in running our family. But we cannot make both ends meet. The seven hundred rupees are spent out within seven days. At the end of each month we are hard-pressed for money. Even time is not as before. This man (Celvanayakam) cannot cut the coat according to the cloth He shows his utmost sympathy for one and all as if he is the only saviour for them. He ought to spend the balance left over after meeting the family expenses freely on them. But he cannot do that. That is why my mind sometimes thinks of business."[57]

This confession of Kancanai in a particular context in the novel makes us understand why she wanted to do business and why she wanted to save money. Celvanayakam's tendency

to squander money which is not in harmony with his financial resources is responsible for Kancanai's hectic pursuit of money. The novelist himself emphasises this point in his preface:

> "It is common to point out that there is something wrong with a particular person and throw all the blame on him or her ...... It is an intelligent approach if we examine the reasons which account for the improper conduct of that particular person".[58]

In the same novel the wife of the Head-clerk of the Collector office is a lascivious lady. Prompted by unusual sexual appetite, she tempts every sturdy handsome youngman whom she comes across. It is she who spoils the handsome, and innocent Annamalai when he happens to stay in her home. But the novelist does not fail to point out that her husband also is responsible for her undesirable behaviour.

The novelist explains through Inspector Cenapati-Cakacampal family in *Perramanam* how certain husbands involve their wives in debauchery and earn money through this depraved means. Cakacampal's natural features, her beautiful sparkling eyes and her graceful posture are helpful in attracting persons. She is an adept in attracting every new officer of her husband by her art of enticement and thus she earns lot of money. Though this sort of business brings a miserable end to her, the novelist does not entirely put the blame on her. He says:

> "The disappointment which she had from her husband leads her to debauchery. As she realised that adultery is profitable she continued to use it as a source of regular income".[59]

Carojini in the same novel is also a debauchee. Though she knows that her husband has illicit contact with other women she does not aim at reforming him. She is indirectly helpful for his nefarious conduct. She fails to bear with patience all the defects of her husband and to reform him by her love,

She has submitted herself as an instrument just to appease the sexual appetite of her husband, and failed to win his love by infusing her true love in his heart. Therefore, he was not alive to the efficacy of love, lust was predominant in him. This led to his indulgence in sowing wild oats throughout. In addition to this, she had an illicit connection with a wealthy merchant and spoiled her family life. Carojini's life will be an eye-opener and a lesson to many family women of to-day. The relationship between a husband and wife is not confined to the satisfaction of sexual appetite only, but it should be a source of mutual love and affection.

Syamala in *Alli* is also a notorious prostitute. Her husband is a dealer in silk goods. He is also very rich. Even when her husband is alive she is unfaithful to him and develops illicit connection with many persons. Her husband also is one whose only aim in life is to amass wealth and so he clearly ignores his moral obligations to his wife. After the death of her husband her residence turns into a brothel house. Her reckless sexual life results in incurable diseases. She has to spend all her money over medical treatment.

In a family life there may arise occasions resulting in seperation between husband and wife for short interval. But this kind of separation promotes the development of mutual love rather intensely. But if the interval is unduly long it may tempt either of the couple to go astray. Ancali, the wife of Pantiyan, in *Man-Kuticai* is a good example. She has a tendency to look upon the trivial mistakes of her husband as grave offences and thus she goes to her mother's house where in due course she develops illicit connection with her cousin. The readers do not fail to understand that Pantiyan's obstinate nature and rigid sense of honour make his wife deviate from her righteous path.

Generally many are under wrong notion that only men treat women badly. But they cannot see that there are even women who spoil the good life of men and bring bad reputation to their family life. Termagant women spoil the peaceful life of their husbands. Kanakam the wife of Tanappan

in *Vata-malar* is a woman of this category. Ignoring her lovely husband she develops an illicit connection with one Vaccira-natan. Her husband very soon detects her undesirable conduct and divorces her by legal means. Sometime later she comes to her husband who out of sympathy permits her to live with him. Slowly she coaxes him to set apart some property in her name. But her husband is unwilling to concede to her request. She soon notices the adamant nature of her husband and one day she mixes poison in the milk and gives it to him. She also takes the poisoned milk and both of them die pathetically.

Kintira in *Nencil Oru Mul* is the first daughter of Vijaya, a wealthy lady. By nature she is irresponsible. Being brought up in a rich environment she fails to understand the seriousness of life and so she leads a life of pleasure according to her whims and fancies. Even in the selection of her husband money becomes the criterion. This tendency makes her freely move with some rich young men and this spoils her health. Her mother Vijaya too wants to have a rich son-in-law. The idea of a young and good-nature son-in-law is of no appeal to her. Somehow Kintira is married to a rich young man. She misuses her independence given by her mother and lives a luxurious life. She even involves herself in horse races and incurs a heavy loss. Very soon she is deserted by her husband and finds herself in a lunatic asylum where she pathetically dies.

In a nutshell, Mu. Va's minor characters are life-like; they are compounds of good and evil like real human beings; they are not only realistic and types but also universals. Like a photographer Mu. Va in addition to their inner feelings, gives us an outside view of his creations. Through his minor characters we get a profound understanding of the human nature. The types of characters are countless and one type tells us nothing of another. Each of the characters comphrehends within itself the whole of human nature and that is why they appeal to all and once have made their acquaintance we can never forget them. In each of them every reader of Mu. Va's novels can recognise something of himself.

CHAPTER VI

PLOT CONSTRUCTION IN THE NOVELS

"A Plot", says C. Carter Colwell, "is a causally related sequence of events. Each event results from the one that went before, according to the law of probability or necessity and then produces the event that follows, according to that same law In this causal chain, the first event is the only one not itself caused and the last event is the only one not leading directly on to further action."[1] R.S. Crane defines plot as "the particular temporal synthesis affected by the writer of the elements of action, character and thought that constitute the matter of his invention."[2] According to some critics 'plot in a novel is only the indispensable skeleton which fleshed out with character and incident, provides the necessary clay into which life may be breathed.'[3] This idea has also becn expressed in the same way by Mirriam Allott who says: "A plot is like bone of a person, not interesting like expression or signs of experience, but the support of the whole."[4] The term plot denotes the parallel sequence of changes in human relations which are occasioned and manifested by the events of action. Hence plot is concerned with the significance of the dramatic symbol and theme.

Plot is therefore the novelist's ordered apprehension of the various events which go to make the story. E.M. Forster distinguishes between story and plot. He defines story as a narrative of events arranged in their time sequence, while plot is likewise a narrative of events, but with the emphasis falling on causality.[5] "The king died and then the Queen died" is a story, but "the king died and then the queen died of grief" is a plot. The difference between these two statements is that while each contains two incidents, the second contains the reason for one of the incidents. The difference seems to lie in the fact that the grief of the Queen is an internal, non-physical human event. What Forster has given us is one external event causing a change in an internal situation, which

causes another external event. Thus, what we have in the plot 'are two exterior events, one interior event, an interior situation and a change.

The author at the beginning of his novel may postulate whatever exterior situation he likes. There may be war or peace, draught or rain; the characters may be poor or rich, married or single, urban or rural; they may have a physical disability or be involved in any kind of relationship with other characters. For the novelist all probable situations that exist are useful. The exterior situation might be said to stand in the same relationship to the working out of the plot as oxygen to fire It is necessary for oxygen to exist, but it is used up in adding strength to the fire. It can never return in the same form. These two given situations, the interior and the exterior, are the beginning point of any novel. This does not mean that the novel starts with a delineation of them. They may never be made explicit by the novelist and may only become apparent as the plot works out The exterior situation may have been created by the interior situation or the characters, and conversely, the interior situation may have been created by the exterior situation. It is my aim in this chapter to study how exterior situations and interior situations have been created and arranged sequentially, consequentially and even logically in Mu. Va's novels.

1. Source or Raw Material

In dealing with the element of plot our primary concern will always be with the nature of the raw meterial out of which it is made and with the quality of such material when judged by the standards furnished by life itself. The basis of true greatness of a novel is to be sought in the substantial value of its raw materials. Generally, the novelists gather their sources of materials from many quarters. Some gather the materials from the puranic sources and legends; some derive inspiration from history and certain events described in the earlier literature For instance, the unfructified love of Tilakavati-Kalippakaiyar has been the source material for *Kurunci-malar*, according to its author N. Parthasarathi.[6]

An American novelist Henry James describes his experience of how he gathered materials for his novels in his preface to *The Spoils of Poynton* (1897)

> " It was years ago, I remember, one Christmas Eve when I was dining with friends : a lady beside me made in the course of talk one of those allusions that I have always found myself recognising on the spots as "germs". The germ, wherever gathered, has ever been for me the germ of a 'story', and most of the stories straining to shape under my hand have sprung from a single small seed, a seed as minute and wind-blown as that casual hint for '*The Spoils of Poynton*' dropped unwittingly by my neighbour, a mere floating particle in the stream of talk. What above all comes back to me with this reminiscence is the sense of the inveterate minuteness, on such happy occasions, of the precious particle – reduced, that is, to its mere fruitfull essence. Such is the interesting truth about the stray suggestion, the wandering word, the vague echo, at touch of which the novelist's imagination winces as at the prick of some sharp point : its virtue is all in its needle-like quality, the power to penetrate as finely as possible. This fineness is that communicates the virus of suggestion, anything more than the minimum of which spoils the operation. If one is given a hint at all designedly one is sure to be given too much; one's subject is in the merest grain; the speak of truth, of beauty of reality, scarce visible to the common eye–since, I firmly hold, a good eye for a subject is anything but usual. Strange and attaching, certainly, the consistency with whieh the first thing to be done for the communicated and seized idea is to reduce almost to nought the form, the air as of a mere disjoined and lacerated lump of life, in which we may have happened to meet it......"[7]

The Tamil novelist P.S. Ramayya in his preface to his novel *Premahram* explains how he was inspired to write

> "Many years ago, a friend of mine narrated to me the difficulties he experienced in sending his daughter to her husband's house. At the time of his celebrating his daughter's marriage his monthly income was only rupees three hundred. At that time his immovable property at Madras was only a piece of land and a house. With that status he negotiated the marriage and celebrated it successfully. Just at the time of sending his daughter to her husband's house, the bridegroom's father demanded that something had to be done to his son by way of presentation consistent with the new income. The poor girl was forced to remain rather in a state of agony in her father's house for nearly six months till her father found a way out to muster that amount from his meagre sources. When I came to know these facts it occured to me rather forcibly that I should write a novel portraying the custom in vogue of fixing a price for the maintenance of husband-wife relationship. That thought of mine resulted in the creation of *Premaharam*".[8]

Thus, we know that what is required in all cases for writing a novel is a vast, many sided experience of men and matters and a resulting general knowledge of life both ample and thorough, the application of which to specific details may vitalise and humanise materials wheresoever gained. This reminds us of the statement of Sisir Chattopadhyaya who says: "All life is the subject matter of the novel. Life, experience - all life, all experience - is the plastic matter to be moulded by the novelist. He must try and recapture the colour of life itself".[9]

Mu. Va is a peculiar person who respected life as an art. Therefore it may be said that he has received almost all the materials from his own experience of life. The following portion of Tiruvenkatam's (*Karit-tuntu*)[10] narration will support my theory.

> "One may say that a person has realized the major portion of human life if he walks from Pachaiyappa's

building (perhaps the building opposite to flower bazaar and fruit-market at present) to Parry's corner. But his eyes and ears must have been sufficiently trained. He should have that training of reading between the lines fron the various sights he observes and the various sounds which he hears. Then only he will derive the maximum benefit. It may be said that the vast world is supposed to exist in the space between Pachaiyappa's and Parry's corner. It may be said that I had learnt a lot of meaningful truths during the walks daily undertaken by me. Just as I used to return home with my bag fully loaded with miscellaneous articles purchased in the course of my walk for the use of my family and children, so also I used to return home with my brain fully loaded with experiences gathered by my eyes and ears".[11]

This excerpt explains clearly where and how the novelist can gather materials for his novels. When we speak of materials of a novel naturally a doubt arises in our mind as to whether he takes the materials from the events or from the persons who are responsible for those events; in other words whether the events give inspiration or the traits of persons in real life give it. As Robert Liddell has stated, "Sometimes an author has been fascinated by a single incident, not in itself the whole subject of the novel, and has discovered his subject after following up the clues given in that incident".[12] But there are some novelists who are inspired by the traits of persons. Many of the novels of Mu. Va have been written, I can boldly say, on the basis of traits of various personalities observed by him. This accounts for the want of importance given to the events in his novels. Many of the characters figuring in his novels are transcripts of real men with whom the novelist might have come into contact or moved closely in life. The following statements of the novelist make my point more explicit.

When a friend asked him about the artist Mokan (*Karittuntu*) the following was his reply :

> "I know such an artist. Several times I have followed him to his residence. I have closely moved with him. My only individual twist is seen in my converting a Tamilian into a Bengali".[13]

when the same friend interrogated the novelist about Collector Celvanayakam, the hero of *Malar-vili* his ready reply was:

> "The artist in *Karit-tuntu* is a person whom I liked very much. He is a living personality. Alli's afflliction was the one that affected me most. Mankai in *Kallo? Kaviyamo*? is also a good character. Above all the character I liked most is Collector Celvanayakam. He was the only good person with whom I moved rather very closely''.[14]

The experience which Mu. Va derived as a teacher is more than all kinds of experiences which he gained otherwise. As a college teacher he might have observed many personalities in their adolescence and felt the actual pulse of their internal and external conflicts. One such student figures in *Akal-vilakku* in the name of Cantiran. The novelist himself has stated this fact in one context:

> "In my profession as a teacher for many years I have come across many such fellows like Cantiran. Some of them who had intelligence only but no principles of ethics and self-confidence ultimately went to dogs and thus stood in my memory. For some of them I have extended sympathy very much and even shed tears. All such young men are collectively represented iu Cantiran".[15]

It has been already pointed out that Mu. Va served as a clerk in the Revenue Department. Perhaps his experience in the Department and his direct observation of the activities of his colleagues and Head-clerk might have supplied enough material for writing his novel *Kayamai*. The character of Anavar, the Head-clerk, may be the outcome of the novelits's

actual observation coupled with his keen imagination. Another character Nallayyan bears close resemblance to the novelist himself in many respects.

It was one of the ardent desires of the novelist that a husband and wife should live a happy and contented life and this finds its expression in *Nencil Oru Mul* through the mouth of Aravali.

> "I have a great desire that in families husband and wife should lead a life of happiness and affection. If there is no such life we can see beastly nature more in the country than in the jungle. There would not be any civilization such as we see at present. There will be more roaring in the country than in the jungle; or half of the people in the world would be lunatics. Therefor, I always advocate the life of love and affection... ..Just as I derive pleasure from the sight of the tremendous growth of an Arabian Jasmine creeper with flowers so also I become happy when I happen to see a family leading a life of love and affection".[16]

The novelist had also several occasions to sit in judgement over several petty quarrels in the families of his own students. He has also done some kind of counselling to his students to avoid such quarrels in the families. I gathered from certain intimate friends of the novelist that he has invariably taken immense pains to write lengthy letters to the students by way of solving the disputes in their families. This experience might have been fruitful to the novelist in writing novels like *Kallo? Kaviyamo? Alli* and *Nencil Oru Mul* which generally portray the ordinary day-to-day events in families.

The author himself has stated in his preface to the novel *Pavai* what prompted him to write that novel.

> "When there was a talk about the theory of *Akam* literature a friend exclaimed saying, 'Sir, these ideas are not in accordance with the spirit of the times! I always dislike what is portrayed as clandestine love

affairs in Tamil literature Such events as trysts during day and night, the lover temporarily keeping himself aloof for certain days from his beloved, private gossip of love intrigues, public gossip of love intrigues, confining young woman to the house, sallowness, heroine's maid, and elopement are not to my taste'. I said: 'these ideas are not out of date. You can say that these terms are inexplicable at present. Eeven now the ways in which the love affairs come into existence remain more or less the same. The lovers meeting secretly in a corn field may not be common today. Even though such a change is found in urban area the same environment can be found even in the country side'. Thus, I fabricated a story. I also pointed out some of the changes that have taken place in the passage of time. Such a fabricated story took the form of the novel *Pavai*".[17]

If one completes one's reading of Mu. Va's *Man-kuticai* one will certainly recall H.G. Wells' *The Invisible man.* One is even led to think that his *Man-kuticai* is an adaptation of the story of *The invisible man.* But in the note found in the form of preface to the book the novelist writes:

> " This is a story which took its genesis and development from my long dream. But a change has been made in it. In the dream one's *mantiram* was used to make the image of Meyyappan who experienced great troubles and tribulations for doing good to others. But in the story I thought it would be better if I incorporate a change by substituting science for *mantiram*".[18]

From this statement we conclude that his dream is the source of the story in *Man-kuticai.*

Generally the event of war forms the ready made source for the supply of materials for the novelist. During the time of war many novels and plays are produced. One reason for this kind of production is that while Mahomet is supposed to

move towards the mountain the mountain itself moves towards Mahomet. In other words the materials come to the author without much effort. Students of English literature are well aware that *A Farewell to Arms*, a novel by Ernest Hemingway and *Major Barbara*, a play by George Bernard Shaw have for their background the events of war and are world fomous. One cannot attribute their popularity to the background of war alone because the themes of these works are also to be accounted for their fame. The two authors did not aim at inculcating patriotism through these works of art. On the other hand they advocated humanism through them. Therefore, their theme is said to be marked by universality of appeal. One can rank Mu. Va's *Anta-nal* with those works of art. Mu. Va himself in his preface to *Anta-nal* has explained the background of that novel.

> "One cannot gauge the innumerable difficulties experienced by the Tamilians who escaped to India from Burma by walking the entire distance during the World War II especially in the years 1941-42. Today the account of their difficulties does not find a place in the pages of history. Anyhow those events are still unforgettable to those who were their kith and kin and who have learnt the details of their difficulties from them. Whenever we recall these details, our hearts naturally clamour for solutions to their problems......This imaginative work has this kind of background".[19]

Thus, Mu. Va has found the sources of the subject-matter for his works in the place where he has lived, that is to say, in his own experiences and increasing knowledge of the world. And the richest mine that has yielded ideas for many stories happens to be his pedagogical and clerical experiences. Besides these two kinds of experiences Mu. Va has found some material for a few of his novels from his own family life.[20]

2. Structure

Mere gathering of the materials required for the subject matter of a novel does not ensure the greatness of a novel. Masterly handling of the materials is an essential requisite in the sense that it enables the author to exploit various possibilities of the given theme. Here I have to confront the broad question of the making of a novel which leads us to the consideration of the two contributory factors, namely, individul power and technical skill. We realise that these two become ineffective if they are not tempered with the novelist's ample knowledge of life. It goes without saying that the author should have evolved for himself a coherent world-view apart from the masterly handling of his subject matter. The art of writing a novel can well be compared with the art of constructing a building. In the construction of building the architect draws the blue print of the building and the mason builds it. But in the art of writing a novel the author plays the role of an architect as well as that of a mason. He uses the materials collected by his intellect and shapes them into a literary masterpiece. When the plot of a novel is conceived by the author by any means, it demands sincerity from him. In this connection Robert Liddell's statement is thought provoking. "The process of working out one's conception in fiction", says he, "is not at all like arranging flowers, putting this here, that there and giving a pull or a twist to a leaf or a spray in order to make it stand out. It is very much more like giving birth to a baby".[21]

When a novelist begins to write his novel with the help of the materials he had gathered, the novel takes a particular shape. Two kinds of views have been expressed by the critics in respect of the importance to be given to the form of a novel. Critics like John Carruthers and others advocate that "life has a pattern; therefore a novel must have a pattern".[22] But Virginia Woolf and other writers differ from this point of view. In one of her statements Virginia Woolf says "life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi transparent envelope surrounding us from the

beginning of consciousness to the end "[23] and so no pattern is necessary for a novel. But the veteran critics like Percy Lubbock, Robert Liddell and Edwin Muir support the first point of view stated above. "In every novel" says Edwin Muir, "things must happen and in a certain order. As they must needs happen, however, it is the order which distinguishes one kind of plot from another".[24] On the basis of the form or structure of the novel he classifies novels as follows: (1) Novel of character (2) Novel of Action and (3) The Dramatic Novel.

Novel of Character

Mu. Va's Novels are not written merely for the sake of a story, intended for those who want to while away the time. On the other hand every one of his novels has been written with a solemn purpose. The structure of the novel has been planned in such a way as to emphasise his aim in many angles. So in his novels the events are a few in number. However, the problems that spring out of these events form the general pattern of the novel and the lengthy dialogues embodying the verbal clashes between the characters centre round the problems. Therefore, some are of the opinion that Mu. Va's novels are only 'Novel of Ideas'. But Edwin Muir the well known English Critic calls them as the 'Novel of Character', which, according to him, is one of the most important divisions of prose fiction. Speaking about the general features of the 'Novel of Character' he says that it has "no very salient plot; no definite action to which every thing contributes; no end towards wihch all things move. The characters are not conceived as parts of the plots; on the contrary they exist independently, and the action is subservient to them".[25] Among the novels of Mu. Va *Centamarai*, *Anta-nal* and *Alli* can be cited as examples of this category. In *Centamarai* the author's aim is to describe love, and the ramifications of love. This novel concludes with such significant events as Tilakam's running away from her house, her taking asylum in the house of a lady at Chittoor, her going to Madras from Chittoor accompanied by Tirunatan, her meeting with a bi-cycle accident at Madras her accidental meeting Marutappan and

through Marutappan her cousin Ilanko, Ilanko's falling in love with Centamarai and Tirunatan's love affair with Tilakam. All these events are only commonplace occurrences and none of them appeals to us or produces any thrill. On the other hand the characters' description of their feelings of love form the structure of the novel. Neither the events nor the development of characters is marked by any novelty. To explain it further, in *Centamarai* the importance is not given to the development of the story. But the ideas and characters illustrating those ideas are conspicuous throughout.

Let us now turn our attention to *Alli*. The significant events which one can point out in this novel are Alli's marriage with Cuppurattinam, absence of harmony in the couple after marriage, their separation and Alli setting up her practice as a physician at Bangalore. Based on these few events the author has written a novel of three hundred and thirty one pages. Here too as we see, the author has not given much importance to events. On the other hand he makes it a point to bring out the sexual feelings of various types of characters in the novel. Perhaps this seems to be his main aim in this novel. Comu's diary running into nineteen pages has been well made use of for the various types of the sexual problems of the unmarried youngmen. Alli's medical notes and the letters received by her which run into eighteen pages mainly deal with the sexual problems of the couples after the marriage. The sexual problems experienced by young widows are revealed through Inpavalli's five page letter. Besides these, we notice in this novel Alli involved in a mental conflict when she longs to have Aravali as her life-partner and the dialogues between Dr. Parameswari and Dr. Alli mainly centre on sex drives, sexual feelings and complications.

The Novelist's aim in writing the novel *Anta-nal* is to describe the atrocities and the total annihilation of men and their property by war. He describes how the war affects an individual as well as a family through the instance of the family of Arumukam and Ponmuti. Again, he lays an emphasis on how the war affects the country and ultimately the world through Vani and Nakappan. Besides this, he makes the characters

Arumukam, Vani, Ponmuti, Kunamalai and Nilamekan narrate individually and thus enables us to infer the characteristics of these characters. Even though there are certain events in this novel they do not contribute to the development of the story But the characters and the atrocities of the war become memorable to the readers.

If we examine *Kallo? Kaviyamo?* in the light of its structure we can mention only three events in it. The first one is the marriage of Mankai with Arulappar, the second one is Mankai's going to Bombay as a result of a quarrel with Arulappar and the third one is Mankai's returning home with Arulappar who happens to go to Bombay and accidently meets Mankai in a hotel. Besides these events other details centre round solving the family problems of the characters. The author ably brings out the ignorance, the impatience, and many omissions and commissions of those characters leading to the catastrophe.

To conclude, one can emphatically state that one can see only the characters and their characteristics in these novels. In my opinion, the events of these novels are uninteresting and they fail to capture the attention of the readers. Even the few events in some of these novels do not, in any way, promote the development of the story nor do they give any stimulus to the readers to read those novels. Therefore, we can rather emphatically state that the plots which are found in these novels are only loose plots. What Edwin Muir says about loose plots is very well applicable to the above mentioned novels of Mu. Va. "The task of the character novelist is more like the choreographer's than the dramatist's. He has to keep his figures moving rather than acting; and for the most part he masked.. he must have freedom to invent whatever he requires So it has been a convention that the plot of 'novel of character' should be loose and easy. As in the novel of action the characters are designed to fit the plot; here the plot is improvised to elucidate the characters."[26]

Novel of Action :

Let us now turn our attention to 'Novel of Action'. According to Edwin Muir, the irresponsible delight in vigorous

events is what chances the novel of action. Why a mere description of violent action should please us is the question for the psychologists. It is our experience that such description pleases us. "In a novel of action" says Edwin Muir "a trifling event will have unexpected consequences; these will spread, and soon they will be numberless, an apparently inextricable web will be woven which will later be miraculously unravelled. In the action, its complications and resolutions, our inerest is taken up; and being interested we are pleased. As the figures are roughly characterised, however, the events will evoke response from them as well as serve to complicate the action. But the action is the main thing, the response of the characters to it incidental, and always such as to help on the plot. The actors have generally such characters and so much character, as the action demands."[27] Therefore, in a Novel of Action more attention is paid to the action and the plot is strictly developed. Among the novels of Mu. Va one cannot find exclusively the instances of the Novel of Action. Though we divide the novels into two categories by way of examining their plots there is no clear cut demarcation in our classification. Edwin Muir says : "There are of course no novels purely of character and merely of conflict. There are only novels which are predominantly the one or the other."[28] In Mu. Va's novels characters occupy a predominant place rather than events.

Novel of Action and Novel of Character :

Let us now examine how many novels of Mu. Va belong partly to the Novel of Action and partly to the Novel of Character and how they strike a gentlemanly compromise which the reader finds it worth his while to read. *Akal-vilakku*, *Vatamalar*, *Nencil Oru Mul*, *Pavai* and *Perramanam* belong to this category wherein we can find this compromise. Here we can clearly find how events and the characters intermingle. As Edwin Muir has stated "the given qualities of the characters determine the action and the action in turn progressively changes the characters and thus everything is borne to an end."[29] Let us, for example, examine *Akal-Vilakku* where the significant characters are three in number, namely, Cantiran,

Velayyan and Malan. The story of that novel takes its root in the character of Cantiran. In the first part of the novel Cantiran's characteristic features come to the fore. Since many are attracted by those features natural relationship between the characters has been established. Catiran's misconceived notions of Imavati's friendship leads him to discontinue his college education which creates a turning point in the story. Similarly, one can perceive in *Kayamai* that Anavar's characteristic features more or less become the basis for the genesis of many events in the story. One can see that the plot of the novel is interwoven with the instances of Anavar's malpractices and atrocities, a stout opposition to them by a group of persons and the murder of Vaceekaram by Anavar's brutal behaviour resulting in many complications, the conviction of Anavar by a criminal court and his suicide in the prison. Similarly, the plots in the other novels also are integrated with the events and the characters figuring in those novels.

Among the novels of Mu. Va the plot of *Karit-untu* has got a special feature. The readers who begin to read this novel for the first time cannot appreciate in the beginning of their reading for the events figuring in the first half of the novel cannot create any interest in them. Those who complete reading this novel can alone appreciate it to their satisfaction and enjoyment. In this connection the eminent critic E.M Forster's statement is thought-provoking. "The facts in a highly organised novel" says he, "are often of the nature of cross-correspondences and the ideal spectator cannot expect to view them properly until he sitting upon a hill at the end".[30] In *Karit-tuntu* there are two inevitable situations. In the first situation the lame artist in the jail narrates his earlier life and in the second one we have an occasion to go through Nirmala's letter. If the story is chronologically presented the lame artist's statement will come first and the details found in Nirmala's letter will come next followed by the first part of the novel But the novelist has not presented the events in that order. He has presented Mokan's later life first and his earlier life at the end. If we probe into the validity of the order in which the novelist has

presented events we can easily understand the artistic skill of the novelist. In this novel the author has profusely introduced dialogues and ideas in respect of art, socio-economic conditions capitalism and Marxism. In order that the readers might not get tired of reading these ideas he has introduced a few elements of suspense. The following will serve as a good example.

> "Two people as husband and wife came by walk with a fat dog......We heard their talk in English after they crossed us. 'Did you ever hear about a crippled man who has a wife and a son', said the man. That kind of wretched and abominable life will be like a hell', remarked his wife. When the artist overheard their conversation, he turned back and smiled".[31]

This part of the naration creates a puzzle in the mind of the reader who has been under the impression that the artist is only a beggar The peculiar feature of the pictures of human beings drawn by the artist is that the persons are portrayed as if they do not possess legs. Once when Tiruvenkatam asks the artist the reason for the absence of legs in the pictures he sidetracks the issue. This incident also creates some confusion in the mind of the reader. The same idea that has been conveyed by the author through Kumarecan is that some significant events might have taken place in the artists' life. But the author does not explain the exact event which is responsible for the peculiar behaviour of the artist thereby creating puzzle after puzzle in our minds. Puzzles of this kind are allied to the element of suspense which the novelist introduces thus. Once when Tiruvenkatam and the artist were talking with each other somebody in the road mentions the name 'Mokan' referring to some other When the artist hears the name 'Mokan' he is shocked to some extent for reasons unknown.[32] Thus the author introduces the element of suspense at many places[33] and creates a sort of curiosity in the readers who start exclaiming as E.M. Forster puts it, "What will happen! What will happen".[34] Had the novelist begun the story of *Karittuntu* with Mokan's life at Calcutta, he could not have created

the element of suspense and even attracted the minds of the readers. As David Sittayya says the novelist has planned the story in such a way that we are not able to know any thing about the dissolute life of Nirmala until the end. We also feel like appreciating her character and we do not show any hatred for her [35] We even extend our sympathy to Nirmala and thus experience some kind of aesthetic pleaure, when she realises her sins and repents for her earlier indecent life.

Even though the author has taken much pains and planned the plot with meticulous care and attention, we somehow feel after finishing the reading that there is something by way of lapse. We feel as if we are not thoroughly satisfied and we also suffer from a feeling of missing something. When we recall the story, we readily understand what the lapse is. The author has conferred great freedom on Kumarecan for talking on socialistic ideas but he has not shown to us clearly what sort of role he plays in the story. He has not even made Kumarecan practise what he preaches. In some places there is no connection between his speech and his action. The author gives us to understand that he was beaten and admitted into the hospital. But, he has not revealed anything about what has happened to Kumarecan later. The author makes us understand through the letter of Nirmala that the artist Mokan was in love with one Maturi at Calcutta but he has abandoned by her once for all after he made acquaintance with Nirmala. But it is rather curious why Mokan concealed this fact when he revealed everything about his past life. Yet there is one reason for this omission. It is only Tiruvenkatam who listens to all that was said by the artist about his past life. In the middle of the narration we see him falling asleep. He himself says:

> "So far I was listening to him. After that he was telling something. I was so tired that I could not withstand the sleep. I tried to overcome it but I could not. Somehow I fell into sleep. I do not know anything about what the artist had been narrating later. I failed to learn everything about him. Somehow I lost that chance".[36]

Perhaps Mokan has referred to something about Maturi also but Tiruvenkatam the narrator falls asleep and thus fails to follow the last part of Mokan's narration and consequently we also lose that chance of knowing something about Maturi.

The next novel on which we direct our attention is *Man-kuticai*. Considering the plot of this novel, we can call it a 'scientific romance', Let us now examine its structure. The novel runs into 504 pages out of which the first 159 pages are devoted to an account of Meyyappan's trip to North India The pages from 160 to 184 embody an account of the discussion among the characters about the Vedantic concepts. The story begins only on page 196. This kind of pattern reminds us of the structure of the novel entitled *The Trial* by the German novelist Franz Kafka. The famous German novelist too begins the story somewhere in the middle of the novel.

A fascinating feature of the novel is the account of the various feats that are performed by the invisible Meyyappan. Such physical movements of the invisible Meyyappan as his flying to many places where atrocities are rampant and punishing those who commit those atrocities, are thrilling and capture the imagination of the reader. The description of action covers nearly 175 pages. The remaining pages are filled by such events as Meyyappan's returning home, his wife's falling into a mood of repentance etc. When one reads this novel one is reminded of *The Invisible Man* a novel by H.G. Wells. Mu. Va has not followed H.G. Wells' novel verbatim but has introduced an obvious change in his work. Griffin the hero of *The Invisible Man* flies to many places, motivated by selfish interest and carries on plunder and pillage, commits murder and engages himself in many nefarious activities. But Mu. Va's invisible Meyyappan stands only for good things.

3. Conflicts

Any great writer shows some remarkable ability in portraying the age in which he lives. His responsibility lies

not only in probing into the intellectual and cultural climate of his age but also in examining the microcosm of man against the macrocosm of the age in which he lives. William Van O'Connor has stated thus: "To be true to his art a man must be true to his age. He must use the resources it presents to him".[37] He employs many techniques to discharge his responsibilities. The character of his age is reflected in many of the aspects of his fiction such as plot, character, theme, view of life and the language in which these are conveyed either implicitly or explicitly. Generally, if we have just a glimpse of the literature of the world we may understand that even in epics written in earlier periods the events of man's external life only are explained. Even in novels written one or two centuries ago the details of external life only are described more. In other words the events have been given primary importance in the story.

Man, in this century, has less manual work; he transacts a major portion of his works with the help of his machines only. With less work and more leisure, man has developed his thinking faculty to a greater extent. Consequently, his life centres round his mind rather than his body resulting in mental conflicts in him. Therefore, the disposition to concern oneself with the subjective aspect of experience has been growing more and more dominant in fiction and has reached a peak in the novels of Kalki, Mu. Va, Akilan, Rajamkrishnan, Parthasarathi and Jaya-kanthan. The events which constitute the plot of a traditional novel such as a quarrel between lovers, a reconcilation, a marriage or a death are submerged beneath the current of life of contemplation depicted in their novels. Edmund Fuller also has observed this trend: "Our time has been described variously as an age of anxiety, and an age of schism in the soul, a time when man suffers not only from war, persecution, famine and ruin but from inner problems fully as terrible: despair, a conviction of isolation randomness, meaninglessness in his existence".[38]

Mu. Va whose main aim is to purify the human life and elevate it to a peak has used the conflicts of the human mind as the central idea of his novels. It may be assumed that the

aims of his artistic creation are to portray the conflicts of an individual, to dive deep into the root cause of such complications and to suggest the various methods of overcoming them. Therefore, one finds that events are less and ideas are more in the novels of Mu. Va. One also comes across number of characters in pensive moods as they are subjected to internal conflicts rather than external conflicts. In other words, the portrayal of mental dispositions of the characters is more conspicuous than that of the events in Mu. Va's novels. His head is so full of ideas that they always clamour for expression. One can say that his ideas suggest the characters and that the events are made to grow by the action of those characters. This need not lead us to the conclusion that his characters are to serve merely as his mouth-pieces to express his ideas. On the other hand those characters are real men full of internal and external conflicts.

Let us now consider the types of conflicts, their nature and their characteristics as presented in his novels. "The heart of any action or plot" according to critics, "is conflict which may be a physical contest between opposed characters or groups of characters. It may also be a moral contest between the protagonist and an opposed force, such as fate, or environment, or an institution. Further, the struggle may be within the character against an aspect of himself, or against his own moral blindness".[39] Generally we perceive in Mu. Va's novels apart from the fiction of inner conflicts, the struggle between wisdom and ignorance, truth and knavery, unalloyed love and the society which is steeped in superstition, economic differences and cast distinctions. In his earlier novels the author generally has portrayed the struggle between an individual and the society to a considerable extent. Let us for example examine the conflicts portrayed in *Centamarai*, *Anta-nal* and *Pavai*. Tilakam and Ilanko are two young charaeters in *Centamarai* whose decisions on any issue generally originate in great deal of reasoning. Both of them as we see, disapprove of the superstitions that haunt the minds of their mothers. Educated in an English school Tilakam imbibes certain salient aspects of Western civilization but is unfortunately disliked and looked upon by her kith and kin as one who is immodest.

We notice a constant struggle between her and her mother who is rather subjected to the dire influence of the teachings of a pseudo-swamiji. The result is that Tilakam runs away from home. She goes to Madras in search of her cousin Ilanko. On her way she takes an asylum in the house of a generous lady who belongs hereditarily to a family of prostitutes. However she meets her cousin Ilanko at Madras. Thus, Mu. Va has written a novel *Centamarai* which deals in the main with a struggle between tradition and modern outlook, a struggle between a life of superstition and a life of enlightenment. In *Pavai* two affectionate souls - Pavai and Palani are fascinated by each other. But caste distinctions and the discrepancy of status and relationship stand in the way of the fruition of their love. "I want a good mate in my life. I desire to have a friend to hear my speech. I want a mind to think as I think. Therefore I am in search of Pavai" is the statement of Palani who boldly faces the adverse forces like caste, creed, and superstitions. "We should not look upon this struggle as one between Palani and Pavai. It is an eternal struggle between one's legitimate rights and irrational beliefs. I will always champion the cause of human rights. I will destroy the blind faith and superstition".[40] This statement of Palani again throws light on the intensity of the struggle which is the backbone of the novel. In the novels like *Kayamai* and *Man-kuticai* we perceive the struggle against knavery. Because of the common tendency of the people to shudder at the very thought of a physically strong and aggressive fellows, undue importance is given to them and this accounts for their thriving on earth. Nallayyan in *Kayamai* is pitted against a knave in the person of Anavar and fights with him tooth and nail. This struggle takes a prominent place in the novel. Though Nallayyan a young man of high culture is defeated in the beginning, *dharma* wins at the end. Anavar ultimately finds himself behind the bars and knavery is thus defeated by *dharma*. We come across a novel type of struggle in *Man-kuticai* between a man of sterling character like Meyyappan and a knave like Kecavarayan. In this struggle the good man Meyyappan is defeated and persecuted. He is convicted for a crime which he has not committed and this is the outcome of the knavery and conspiracy of Kecavarayan. The knave emerges as a victor out of this struggle. In

this respect Mu. Va has deviated from the tradition of other novelists who generally select a theme by which they illustrate that virtue triumphs and vice is defeated and disgraced. On the other hand he tackles a practical situation of the day to day life to drive home the idea that wicked people sometimes thrive and good people who take a cudgel against the wicked are likely to perish. Vani and Nakappan in *Anta-nal* are involved in a struggle against the idea of war. They are of the opinion that war is an institution created by man unfortunately. The bane of war is that it strikes terror in the hearts of the people in general and becomes an origin of series of tortures. So, according to them it is the greatest sin for any one to involve people in war. They even think that it is an unpardonable sin on the part of people to entertain the idea of war and to make all the required arrangements for war. Therefore, they start a denigrating campaign against the government which advocates war and consequently they are convicted. In this respect also the novelist breaks a new ground unlike the traditional novelists and tries to establish the truth that it is but natural sometimes that even those who oppose wickedness and knavery are punished and defeated.

The writers of to-day are more concerned with the psychic conflict or inner struggle when the character is torn between the warring elements within himself. Great narrative has frequently been concerned with man's dualism, the conflict between the forces of 'good' and 'evil', and with his 'higher' and 'lower' nature. Man who is higher than the beasts', has had a great deal to live up to, torn between his natural impulses and the socially created *tabus* which have given him a sense of guilt or sin. With the development of the science of psychology and psycho-analysis, modern man has become more and more aware of psychic conflicts, and today we find much of the most penetrating and sophisticated narrative concerned with the often unconscious ambivalences, tensions, and conflicts arising within the individual who is not as integrated as he likes to imagine. This subject matter is available to any writer depending upon his powers of insight. We often experience an involvement in an obvious conflict between duties of antithetical nature within the circle of our family: between our love and

hatred for father, mother, brother, sister, and eventually friend, lover, husband, wife, and child. All lives are subjected to internal conflicts which arise from the eternal dualistics between inordinate desires and the dictates of the conscience. Modern psychology tells us that the sources of these psychic conflicts are more or less the same namely, the environment of the family and the social relationships. But the manifestations and intensities of these conflicts often vary from individual to individual. The psycho-analyst and clinical psychologists probe into these conflicts, to which the sufferer himself is not alive very often.

In the light of the foregoing observations let us consider Mu. Va's novels in which the internal conflicts are more significant than external ones. Mu. Va generally does not give much importance to external conflicts. In other words, he deliberately avoids dilating on the villainy of a rogue or a knave lest he should accord undue importance to skirmishes and trivial clashes at the expense of the genuine confllicts which deserve depiction and exploration. One can have an inkling into his mind by a letter written by Meykantar to Meyyappan who wants to oppose the knave Kecavarayan.

> Meykantar writes: "Don't think of enmity with any outsider who has done harm to you. The jungle belongs to a cow; it belongs to tiger also. The country, similarly, belongs to the good and the bad. This is the order of the creation of the Almighty. If you dislike anybody it means that you dislike His very creation itself...... Let Nature punish him (Kecavarayan) if it so wills. Let the Government punish him if it proposes to do so. Why do you want to play the role of a policeman or a judge? You be away from him. Why do you want to put yourself into trouble? Let Nature and Law take their own course to deal him with".[41]

This may be the reason for his scrupulous avoidance of external conflicts of little value which he generally associates with the internal conflicts. The same idea is voiced forth in his another

novel *Nencil Oru Mul* wherein he says: "Our life mainly depends upon our mind; it concerns less with the quantity of food we take and the quality of dress we wear. But it concerns out and out the mind".[42] This deep-felt conviction of the author might have led to the creation of 'men of ideas' in almost all his novels. "The highly sensitive man", observes Mary Burchard Orvis, "the man who is a little different, or who feels himself different, – this is the man who easily falls victim to severe and often devastating conflict".[43] In the light of this statement we are able to see only thinking persons – 'persons of ideas' in Mu. Va novels getting involved in internal conflicts. We can cite Vativu, Alli, Velayyan and Nirmala as examples. Vativu, the heroine of *Nencil Oru Mul* is a soft-hearted lady as the author himself has pointed out in a particular context. Therefore, her mind itself becomes a field of struggles. Her conflicts develop into the story of that novel. One may interpret her conflicts in terms of four stages. The first phase of her mental conflicts is created by her love for Palaraman which does not attain fruition; the conflicts which arise out of her married life with Akor form the second phase; her conflicts enter the third phase when she, having been entangled in a moral trap and molested by Palaraman, finds herself in a family way and the fourth stage of her conflicts is the outcome of her knowledge of the love affair between Kannalakan who is born of her but begotten of her paramour Palaraman and Anparaci the daughter of Palaraman. The conflict of the fourth stage reaches its climax in the story. The significance of these four stages is that they are not in isolation but interlinked. The conflict of one stage not only gives rise to another conflict but develops it to a considerable extent. For example, Vativu's first conflict which is due to her unstable love for Palaraman forms the basis for initiating the third conflict in her. After eight years of wedded life with Akor, Vativu, who unexpectedly meets her former paramour Palaraman, forgets all about her present condition and yields to the temptation and partakes of the carnal delights of Palaraman. This even leads to the fourth conflict in her. Thus the plot of *Nencil Oru Mul*, as pointed out by modern critics, "sets up develops and resolves a conflict for the purpose of onveying the theme".[44]

The novelist himself is conscious of the biological factor that the attraction between male and female is the Law of Nature. The body is invariably prone to executing this law. But the mind which conceives of many principles based on health, morality, ethics and social conditions, advocates restraint. The struggle between mind and body in respect of the expression of sexual urges is common not only to knaves but also to persons of enlightenment. Knaves succumb to the temptation but men of enlightenment try to withstand it reposing on their strong will power and relying on their unshakable faith in the moral code.[45] This is the strongest conflict constantly taking place between emotion and intellect. In this connection, we are reminded of the observation of Mary Burchard Orvis who says: " Conflict betrays itself its production of opposing desires and alternating emotions. One line of reason says to the hero " you ought to do this", but another line says " No, you ought to do that". Such a conflict may be merely an intellectual duality, but what complications appear when strong emotional drives enter to compound reasoning and say it may! What inner and outer confusion when the emotional urge defies the intellect!"[46] The best example of this conflict is found in *Alli*. Aravali falls sick when he comes to Bangalore and he is forced to stay in the Nursing Home of Alli who has just started her practice at Bangalore. Alli who happens to nurse him for sometime desires to have him as her life-mate. But another thought opposes and prevents her from harbouring such an intention in her mind.

> " I had the privilege of coming into contact with not only his look but also his body. When he was suffering from that ailment I touched him out of sympathy and with the only aim of doing service by curing him. But my body wanted to have him, my sympathy and spirit of service being used as the steps to attain the goal..... The mind which was inclined to do service in a spirit of sympathy slowly gave place to the fleshly desires. Why? It even asks what the harm will be if one had such a man as one's life-mate. At that juncture, I become bewildered and soon I get into my own room".[47]

This confession of Alli clearly indicates how the mind is being tossed between the dictates of intellect and the urges of emotion. Inpavalli, another character in the same novel, is also involved in such a struggle. In general, we come across series of conflicts in Mu. Va's novels when events are not many.

4. Openings and Endings

The beginning and the ending of any novel are important aspects. But there are no hard and fast rules which serve as guidelines to a novelist regarding the beginning and the ending of a novel. He has ample freedom to exercise by way of embellishing his work with an artistic beginning and on artistic finish. Further, the novelist ought to bear the interest of the readers in mind when he begins to write. The beginning of any novel should evoke the imagination of the readers and stimulate interest in them. As Philip Stewick has stated " The aspiring writer begins briskly with a sentence both arresting in itself and suggestive of the tone of the whole novel".[48] The beginnings of some of the novels of Mu. Va certainly stimulate the interest of the reader. For example, the story of *Man-kuticai* begins thus : " How much was I delighted when the news of the release reached ! It was more or less as expected".[49] This kind of beginning of the novel raises many questions in the mind of the reader such as " Release ! Whom? What sort of release is it? Why release at all?" and the reader evinces interest in reading the novel further by way of finding answers for these questions. Mu. Va creates a mood of suspense in the beginning which lends momentum to the narrative and prompts the reader to read the entire novel at a stretch.

Nencil Oru Mul opens like this: "I was so far under the impression that education makes only the body soft. I now realise that it does so even the mind".[50] This opening not only exposes a universal truth but also reveals the internal conflict of the characters. It shows further how man is being tossed between the conflicts as he grows more and more in intelligence. It seems that the novelist implicitly explains even

in the beginning that a man who treads on the path of truth is even punished by truth when he swerves from that path.

"The world is wicked. Eventhough he is good, the world is wicked".[51] The story of *Kallo? Kaviyamo?* opens in this way. The very opening of this novel explains in a way what the story is about. We are clearly aware that there is a conflict in this novel and that conflict arises due to the intrusion of the exterior force from the society.

The ending of a novel also should create a sort of emotional stir as the opening of it and more over it should be in an artistic way. It is indispensable that the conflicts so far created by the novelist find satisfactory solutions in the endings of a novel; otherwise the story will not have an appea rance of a complete whole. Some novelists do know how to create conflicts but fail in resolving them through successful completion. Therefore, their stories remain unfinished. Some other novelists when they are at a loss to resolve the conflicts, sacrifice certain characters in the story and end it. Still some others introduce some improbable events in the story and give them an abrupt end. But a skilful novelist ends the story in a probable way to the entire satisfaction of the readers who applaud that the ending is a suitable one. Generally though the endings of certain novels of Mu. Va are appropriate he leaves, in certain cases, the conclusions to the imagination of the readers. For example, *Nencil Oru Mul*, ends thus: "Just then Kannalakan came to us with the child Vijaya in his arms. I saw Geetha follow him".[52] This ending raises many questions in the reader's mind: Did Kannalakan accept Geetha as his spouse? If it is so, what happened to Anparaci?" The answers for these questions are left to the imagination of the readers.

The endings of certain novels of Mu. Va lead us to assume that they have been made very artistically, For example the novelist ends the story of *Kayamai* as:

"Olintan oru kayavan" –
'One knave ceased to exist'.[53]

If we probe into his sentence we become alive to the profundity of the author's artistic skill. He might have ended the story as 'the knave ceased to exist'. The adjective 'Oru' in the sentence is significant as it is meaningful. It is thought-provoking as it gives different shades of meaning. In one sense it means that there are hundreds of knaves hiding themselves without being caught by law; or there are many other knaves who take law and even law courts into their hands and wield them according to their convenience. These knaves have not ceased to exist. Only a particular knave was caught and was put to death. In another sense it may be as follows: 'To dispose of one knave many people had to do many kinds of sacrifices. It was necessary even to amend certain laws; it was also necessary to institute new law courts for the purpose. We do not know how many more sacrifices are to be made by people to crush those knaves who are constantly escaping from the clutches of law; we do not even know how many new laws have to be enacted.' Perhaps the author has used the Tamil adjective *'Oru'* in order to convey different shades of meanings thus

To conclude, we may say that Mu. Va has not given first place either to the story or to its plot. We see in his novels the delineation of internal and external conflcts on the basis of human problems and the creation of situations for lengthy dialogues which centre round those conflicts. Therefore the element of discussion becomes predominant in his novels. In this connection, we are reminded of the statement of Dr. R. Dhandayudham who says: "Dr. Mu. Va's novels were not written for the sake of enjoyment of story. Each novel contains an idea. The plot of that novel will be such as to lead it to emphasise the great ideal in many angles. Hence in his novels events are very few; the thoughts on the basis of these events are many".[54]

NOTES :

1. *A Student Guide to Literature*, p, 1.
2. *Quoted* in *Critical Approaches to Fiction*, p. 45.
3. Robert Scholes and Robert Kellog : *The Nature of Narrative*, p. 239.
4. *Novelists on the Novel*, p. 249
5. *Aspects of the Novel*, p. 93.
6. *Kurinci-malar* (Preface).
7. Quoted by Miriam Allott in his *Novelists on the Novel*, p. 138.
8. *Premaharam* (Preface)
9. *The Technique of Modern English Novel*, p. 224.
10. The Novelist's Pet name in the family circle.
11. *Karit-tuntu*, p. 9.
12. *A Treatise on the Novel*, p. 80.
13. Mokan, R. *Yan Kanta Mu. Va*, p. 154.
14. ibid. p. 167.
15. Pakkiamuttu (Ed.) *Vitutalaikkuppin Tamil Navalkal*, p. 38.
16. *Nencil Oru Mul*, p. 389.
17. *Pavai* (Preface)
18. *Man-kulicai*, (Author's Note)
19. *Anta-nal* (Preface)
20. *Yankanta Mu. Va*. pp. 172–173.
21. *A Treatise on the Novel*, pp. 85–86.
22 *The Future of the English Novel*, p. 119.
23. *The Common Reader*, p. 189.
24. *Structure of the Novel*, p. 16.
25. ibid, pp. 23–24.
26. ibid, pp. 26–27.
27. ibid, pp. 20–21.
28 ibid, p. 62.
29. ibid, p. 41.
30. *Aspect of the Novel*, p. 95.
31. *Karit-tuntu*, p. 29.
32. ibid, p. 131.
33. ibid, pp. 135, 144, 148, 162, 222 and 223.
34. *Aspects of the Novel* p. 95.
35. Akilan and Rajadorai (Ed.) : *Valarum Tamil Ilakkiyam*, p.139.
36. *Karit-tuntu*, p. 212.
37. *Forms of Modern Fiction*, p. 2
38. *Man in Modern Fiction*, Preface XVII.
39 Lynn Altenbernd and Leslie L. Lewis : *A Hand Book for the Study Fiction*, p. 66.
40. Pavai, p. 130.
41. *Man-kutical*, pp. 501–502.
42. *Nencil Oru Mul*, p. 93.
43. *The Art of Writing Fiction*, p. 50.
44. Dietrich R.F. and Sundell, R.H. (ed.), *The Art of Fiction*, p. 48.

45. *Alli*, p. 222.
46. *The Art of Writing Fiction*, p. 64.
47. *Alli*, p. 226-227.
48. *The Chapter in Fiction*, p. 75.
49. *Man-kuticai*, p. 5.
50. *Nencil Oru Mul*, p. 7.
51. *Kallo? Kaviyamo?* p.6
52. *Nencil Oru Mul*, p. 548.
53. *Kayamai*, p. 448.
54. *Dr. Mu. Va, vin Ilakkigankal*, p. 33.

CHAPTER VII

THE AUTHOR'S STYLE

"The well known saying goes 'The style is the man', complex or a simple, in his individuality, his plenary sense of what he really has to say his sense of the world .....The style, the manner, would be the man, not in his unreasoned and really uncharacteristic caprices, involuntary or affected, but in absolutely sincere apprehension of what is most real to him".[1] In the light of this view we can assume that any writer has to put the whole of his personality into his writing ; style is the writer's individual way of thinking or seeing things.

In Classical Latin the word '*stilus*' originally meant a man's 'way of writing'; gradually its meaning was extended to his 'way of expressing himself' in speech as well as in writing. In Modern English the meaning has been narrowed to signify 'a *good* way of expressing oneself'. This is how F.L. Lucas explains the meaning of style.[2] He further states that style is "the effective use of language especially in prose whether to make statements or to rouse emotions. It involves first of all to put facts with clarity and brevity".[3] Another English critic Northrop Frye explains style as follows : "In all literary structures we are aware of a quality that we may call the quality of a verbal personality or a speaking voice – some thing different from direct address through related to it. When this quality is felt to be the voice of the author himself, we call it style".[4]

Personal idiosyncrasy :

One of the distinct meanings proposed by J. Middleton Murry for style is the personal idiosyncrasy of expression by which one recognises a writer.[5] Many elements go to make up this individuality. One of the best ways of distinguishing and discovering the order of their importonce is to play that excellent game of guessing the authorship of passages. When

a writer speaks in his own person, as the essayist or the critic, we look first to his turn of thought and then to his turn of phrase. When we deal with the 'objective' art of the dramatist or the novelist we look perhaps for his turn of phrase and then the peculiarity of his vision. Whatever goes to make a man's writing a recognisable trait is included in his style.

Let us examine Mu Va's style in the light of what has been stated above. As a great lover of *Tirukkural* he makes references to this *Magnum Opus* in many places in his novels. In fact, there is no novel of his without reference to this immortal work. In *Nencil Oru Mul* for example he makes Aravali, his mouth-piece draw the attention of Vativu to the importance of this work.

> Aravali says: "You should read *Tirukkural* in whatever way you can and make your own personal property. If you could not read the whole treatise at least you should read *arattup-pal* only and master it. The other two parts namely *porut-pal* and *kamattup-pal* are the shores of the sea. *Arattup-pal* is all about the see of life.

This is how Mu. Va refers to the greatness of *Tirukkural* in his novels. He cannot afford to forget to make a reference to this book. This is the peculiarity of the novelist.

The novelist can also be referred to as a 'novelist of ideas'. Even by a casual reference to any page of his novel we may come across brilliant and noble 'ideas' either directly emanating from him or through one of his characters.

> The following passage is found in the diary of Comu (brother of Alli, the heroine of the novel) in *Alli*: "One should mend one's mind, daily just as one is mending one's face and hair. To mend one's hair a mirror is necessary; similarly to mend one's mind the habit of jotting down important events in one's dairy is necessary. Or one should meditate great men like Tirunavukkaracar and bring to mind all that have been done by

him on the present and previous day and meditate on them also."[7]

This is how the novelist emphasises the importance of the great sayings of the great men and propagates his thoughts in the right direction.

One can see pure, simple Tamil words and small sentences employed by the novelist in the above passages in the original. Any casual reader will immediately identify that the passages are from the pen of the novelist. We too take a chance sometime or the other of glancing at a passage of unknown authorship and try to guess about its author. In such a case it is often not the thought that strikes us first as the way in which the thought is expressed. The passage has somehow – we might be at a loss to say exactly how – a characteristic ring like that of a well-known voice However common place the idea is, we feel sure, that no one else would have put it just in that way except a particular author. The style of Maraimalai atikal, Tiru. Vi. Ka, Dr. R P. Sethu Pillai and Arignar Anna can be cited as the best example to elucidate this point. The choice of the words, the turn of the phrases, the structure of the sentences their peculiar rhythm and cadence – these are curiously instinctive with the individuality of the writer. The idea communicated may be of little value to distinguish it, but the man has put himself into it nonetheless. The style of a really gifted mind is peculiarly its own. It follows him *as* a shadow. His thought and feeling are personal and so is his language.

The Technique of exposition:

The second meaning proposed by Middleton Murry 'is the technique of exposition'[8] which means the power of lucid exposition of a sequence of ideas. I am of the opinion that style in this sense can only be properly applied to the exposition of intellectual ideas. Mu. Va takes extra-ordinary interest into explaining even a complicated idea in a lucid manner. Besides his use of simple, direct but forceful expressions, his way of using similies apt to the situations throw

a flood of light on the meaning of that idea. Whether the idea is of God or of Nature or of Philosophy or of Ethics even a lay person will be able to understand by means of his similies. It is not for nothing that R. Mohan pours encomium on Mu. Va and describes him as the artist of similies'[9]

Mu. Va speaks through the mouth of Tanappan: "A child is like the pure rain water, a water coming directly from the atmosphere without any trace of taint of this world. You and I as we grow old have been transformed into water fallen on the saltish ground or clayish soil. Still others have been completely metamorphosed like a rain drop fallen into dirty gutter...... Even though the rain water has fallen into gutter, is it not again converted into vapour by the hot sun? The transformation of water into vapour can be likened to salvation or *mukti*."[10]

We are really attracted by this simple but beautiful analogy used by the author to interpret an otherwise difficult philosophical concept. In Mu. Va's works a simile is not a mere pen-picture meant for diversion but also for suggestion. Though the narrative is adorned with similies they are not ornament meant for pleasing diversion. They are not excrescent to but integral with the situation portrayed. Thus similies can embody the sinificance of the situation and lend an additional dimension to it. Another analogy we come across in *Antanal* is as follows:

In the person of Kunamalai the author speaks: "Men are like butter and women like fire. When butter nears the fire how can it maintain its original state without melting? Therefore, women should not move closely with men except their husbands.[11]

Obviously, Mu. Va does not use simile merely as an embellishment. He rather uses it to enhance the significance of the meaning of a complicated idea or a difficult concept. Simile serves the purpose of lending depth and force to the idea communicated or an event described or a mental state depicted by the author.

Style as the highest achievement of literature :

The third meaning given by the same author to style is the highest achievement of literature.[12] Style, in this absolute sense is a complete fusion of the personal and the universal. A great writer is never more intensely and recognisably himself than his great passage; to use a vaguely metaphysical phrase, absolute style is the complete realisation of the universal significance in a personal and particular expression. While the majority of men use language of their time as they find it, the man of genius employs any language to serve his own purposes, and moulds it according to his own peculiarity. This means that language always receives a certain fresh impetus from the hands of every writer of strongly marked personality. In this sense we have another illustration of the intimate and inevitable personality and style.

A good style should attract all sections of readers, the learned and the laity, at all levels. One can perceive in Mu. Va's style the combination of the purity of the language of Maraimalai atikal and the simple sentence structure of Thiru. Vi. Ka. In addition to these aspects he gives the element of simplicity to his writings and couches them in a peculiar style. The readers of Tamil novels are bound to realise that in no other writers of Tamil novels the impact of Tamil literature is so great as in Mu.Va. It is obvious that the author who has mastered the Cankam Classics makes use of every opportunity to intersperse his writings either with the ideas of Cankam poems or with certain lines of those poems. For example, in his first novel *Centamarai* the author, when he introduces Marutappan, cites a few lines of a poem in *Akananuru,*[13] as if the character is enjoying that beautiful poem and at the same time makes the readers enjoy it. In the preface to his another novel *Kallo? Kaviyamo?* he refers to a poem of Kapilar and thus explains the theme of that novel. Similarly one reads the influence of *Cilappatikaram* and *Manimekalai* in his novel in many places. In his novel *Malar-vili* we are able to see the author waxing eloquent on the rich and beautiful ideas of Cankam literature. We are made to understand by Muttayyan, the narrator of the

novel that all the portraits drawn by Kancanai carry at their bottom a few lines of either Cankam poems or *Kanal-vari* verses as if they illustrate and interpret the portraits. On one occasion he introduces Collector Celvanayakam delivering a lecture on the beauties of *Kalit-tokai*. At the end of the novel we are rather thrilled when the author introduces Malarvili comparing her dedicated service as a teacher with the renunciation of Manimekalai. Besides Cankam literature one can witness the influence of the hymns of Tayumana Atikal and Ramalinka Atikal in many places in his novels. The author presents Arumukam in *Antanal* Nallayyan in *Kayamai* Meyyappan in *Man-kuticai* reciting those hymns after the manner of those saints who rendered them in sonorous voice and at the same time retained their poetic experience. The readers of these novels will certainly perceive that the influence of Tamil literature gives a special beauty and attractiveness to his style. "Dr.M. Varadarajan, the Professor of Tamil in the Madras University", observes Prof. T.P. Meenakshisundaram, "has given dignity and respectability to novel-writing even in the world of pandits who thought of this art as the hobby of those who failed to become pandits or scholars. His style is both simple and elegant unlike the style of the majority of other novelists."[14] His style is not pedantic unlike the style of certain pandits of his times. His mellifluous style is in the easy reach of all sections of society present in various regions of Tamil Nadu. As he has advocated equality in all its aspects he has advocated equality in style.

The style of an author shapes itself according to the innate quality of his mind. If he possesses determination, strong conviction of ideals and definiteness of purpose his style takes its shape according to these aims. If he has a clear intellect his style also acquires clarity. It also shapes itself according to the mood of the author. Experts have drawn up for us various lists of the elements which should combine in the making of a good style: "Style is a quality", says J. Middle Murry, "of language which communicates precisely emotions or thoughts, or a system of emotions or thoushts peculiar to the author".[15] There are the intellec-

tual elements in the style of an author the precision arising from the right use of the right words, the lucidity resulting from the deft arrangement of words in the formation of sentences and the propriety or the harmony which should exist between the things said and the pharsing of them. There are the emotional elements of force, energy, suggestiveness or the elements by which a writer conveys not only his thought but also his feeling stimulating in his readers sentiments or passions akin to his own and calling up vivid pictures of things he wishes his readers to see with him. For this, as William F. Irmscher has observed, he uses 'metaphoric language, symbolic language, styled language, verbal humour, satire etc.'

In the light of this observation Mu. Va's style can be analysed. When he thinks of the superstitious beliefs, ups and downs in economic levels and sufferings prevailing in the society his style gains energy and force. For example, in *Kayamai* he says :

> "This is a society of money-hunts. People are anxious to amass money by hook or crook. They never give respect to decency; they have no faith in hard work. They are not satisfied with the income in consonance of their labour. They are trying to find out shortcut methods to earn money. They have gone even to the extent of believing that God will bless them with wealth by accepting *archanas* and other forms of worship as a bribe".[16]

Humour is a rare element seen in Mu. Va's writings as he is a writer of serious themes. But one can perceive subtle elements of humour interspersed in his writings. In one context the words of Velayyan embody the element of humour.

> "At the beginning of the month *Thai* I used to develop itches...This year at the beginning of *Thai* the itches took an asylum in me. I happen to scratch the itches during day and night even while sitting and walking. Even during my deep study my hand will be

engaged in scratching. When I am engaged in writing my left hand will be useful to do that odd job of scratching. Sometimes even my right hand will stop writing and engage itself in the odd job of scratching".[17]

Sometimes on seeing the precarious and pathetic conditions of society he not only shows his indignation but also his sympathy. Whenever he sees the sorrowful states of women he pours out all his emotions in his writings. For instance let us examine a situation in *Malar-vili*. Owing to utter poverty a young girl takes to prostitution as her profession and carries on her business in the premises of a railway station. Seeing the girl on the platform, the Railway porters surround her and jeer at her saying, "She is a public-worker. She has to help a lot of persons. She has no time to stand nor has a mat to lie on .....". The author in the words of Muttayyan says, "My mind which has already been affected by ulcers now began to ooze pus".[18]

At times when he is in a sorrowful mood his style also catches that mood and evokes sympathy and sorrow in the reader's mind. The passage in *Alli* describing the unfortunate condition of Inpavalli after she lost her husband, touches our heart.

> "One could not see life in her face when she left for Bangalore after finishing the burial ceremony of her husband's body. As in a statue, her eyes were in riveted attention looking in the direction of Tambaram. Her eyes were in atand still without turning this side or that side .. ..she saw; but her sight was like the sight of a dead body . When the train moved she turned her eyes towards me. Only her head trembled; my eyes were welled with tears; I wiped out the tears. When the train moved further I heard her crying aloud".[19]

Dialogue is one of the component parts of a novel. Stephen Minot has clearly pointed out the different roles that dialogues play in a novel. "But almost every line of successful dialogue" says he, "performs more than one duty. In addition to developing the theme, it reveals character, establishes the

tone, and moves the plot".[20] In the light of this statement dialogues employed by Mu. Va in his novels may be examined.

First let us examine how the dialogue explains the theme with reference to one or two novels. Let us take the novel *Alli* first. As Dr R. Dhandayudham points out "*Alli* is built around the problem of sex".[21] One dialogue taking place between Aravali and Comu as recorded in Comu's diary[22] and another lengthy dialogue taking place between Dr. Alli and Dr. Parameswari[23] clearly deal with the problems of sex, love, lust, the clandestine and traditional unions of lovers, the merits and demerits of such union and thereby help the development of the theme. Secondly, let us take *Kayamai* which in the main deals with the evils in politics, corruption generally prevailing among the official class besides the status of the present day society. The dialogue taking place among Venkatecan, Nallayyan and Cakayan[24] and the dialogue taking place among Anavar, Kanakalinkam and Muniappa[25] and that taking place between Anavar and Kanakalinkam[26] skilfully promote the development of the theme in the novel.

We may now consider how the dialogues in Mu. Va's novels are helpful to the development of plots. Generally it is found that events in Mu. Va's novels are a few, and take place at long intervals. But dialogues and thoughts are more in number. The dialogues besides bringing out the characteristics of men and women in his novels, lend cohesion to various events for the development of the plot. Let us take for example the dialogue taking place in the jail between artist Mokan and Tiruvenkatam in *Karit-tuntu*.[27] It reveals the previous life of the artist at Calcutta and how he carried on a family life with Nirmala. In a way half of the story is narrated by this dialogue. The dialogue taking place between Tiruvenkatam and Ponni[28] gives us part of the story. In *Centamarai* the dialogue taking place between Marutappan and Ilanko[29] serves as a bridge in the plot. It serves Ilanko to trace out the whereabouts of Tilakam. In course of that search Ilanko wins the love of Centamarai and thus the story attains its full growth.

The dialogue establishes the tone which is explained by Lee T. Lemon as "the impression conveyed by a style-serious, tender, playful, ironic, outraged etc., -- is called tone".[30] As in poetry certain words and phrases also express the emotions of the author, in course of the narration of events either by the characters of a novel or by its author we are able to identify the tone of the author.

Lastly, the dialogue should expose the nature of the characters. It does it in two ways, namely, by its content, by the words and their peculiar usage. Opinion is divided in the matter of employing the language when the author introduces the dialogue. Certain critics think that the language should be in confirmity with the nature of person engaged in the dialogue. In this connection we are reminded of the statement of Somerset Maugham: "And just as behaviour should proceed from character, so should speech. A fashionable woman should talk like a fashionable woman, a street walker like a street walker, a soda jerker like a soda jerker and a lawyer like a lawyer. The dialogue should neither be desultory nor should it be an occasion for the author to air his opinions; it should serve to characterize the speakers and to advance the story".[31] The characters may use, according to their nature, even slangs and dialects. Critics who argue on these lines seem to bear in mind only regional novels in which only the characteristics of the speech of the region are given the primary importance. Therefore, according to them, a rickshawvala should be made to speak in his own language and the learned people in their refined language.

Another school of critics is of the opinion that purity of a language should not be sacrificed at the altar of reality. According to critics like Rabio Macauley and George Lanning "Dialect and bad grammar, as usages, are to be avoided whenever possible. Dialect is wearying to read; if the writer feels that it is necessary to characterization, it should be pegged on a few typical expressions or pronunciations, and otherwise suggested by syntax perhaps by common inversion".[32]

Mu. Va can be pinned down to the category of critics just now referred to. According to him the dialogues in the novel may be based on the trends of the day-to-day life. Even then the dialogue can undergo certain modifications in the hands of the writer. Mu. Va is of the opinion that the writer can suggest the idea as well as emotions by using suitable words and by ignoring words which carry vague meaning. His opinion about the form of dialogue is expressed clearly in the following passage.

> He says: "Dialogue is the *sine qua non* of any novel. More or less it should be in the form here as it is used in a drama. In a novel it should help in explaining the story. It should also help in exposing the characters of the novel. The dialogue which is not helpful to these aspects should be considered unnecessary and therefore it should be eschewed. Even if it is otherwise spicy it should be avoided if it is not necessary for a particular novel. One need not incorporate all the details that are found in the day-to-day speech of the people. One can use the salient features of a dialogue that naturally fit in according to the trend of the story".[33]

We will now consider how Mu. Va has employed words and phrases according to the nature of the characters he introduces in the novel. To cite certain examples, the speeches of the gipsies in *Pavai* and those of the country people and hut-dwellers as shown in *Perramanam*, *Karit-tuntu*, *Pavai* and *Akal-vilakku* reveal how they use words in the day-to-day life. We see in *Malar-vili* that the author is realistically employing the language of the rustics, rural folks and even porters.[34] Likewise, he indicates how the English-knowing people are using English words freely in their conversation. He has not failed in his novels to indicate how the characters on certain occasions use words and phrases fraught with emotions. The use of such words as 'idiot', 'rascal', '*matayan*', '*ceruppal atipen*', 'fool' etc., by Anavar *(Kayamai)* who has developed an aggressive attitude to others, and the temple priest's use of such words as '*namadeyam*', '*kottiram*' and the artist Mokan's

(Karit-tuntu), blabbering Bengali words during his sleep and the Telugu patient's *(Antanal)* attempts to speak in Telugu may be cited as examples. Similarly the speeches of drunkards and children have been beautifully recorded by Mu. Va in many places. Anavar's speech in a drunken mood and the speech of Akor *(Nencil Oru Mul)* in the same condition and that of the prattling son *(Centamarai)* can be cited as examples.

In spite of these salient features of his style, there are some critics who are of the opinion that his style is not marked by any modernity and therefore it does not contribute to the evolution of Tamil prose. One such critic is Sri K.N. Subramaniam who says:

> " The modern sensibility of the writer finds expression in modern terms in a conversational, almost casusal idiom. As against the purist of Tamil, who make the language a stately dull affair, and as against the academics, who want Tamil prose to be colourless and ambiguous - the pun is still a favourite device with the academic writers the creative writers of Tamil make modern use of dialectal and regional words. The novels of Janakiraman, R. Shanmugasundaram, Hepziba Jesudasan and Sundara Ramaswamy, to single out only the best, use their various regional dialects with great and tellingly modern effect, this kind of riches is unimaginable except in prose and in the modern context. As against this trend, I should point out a tendency to use language, statically as it were, academically, the novels of M. Varadarajan and a handful of his followers fall in this category and have a lack of modernity in their content as well as in their language." [35]

These issues raised by the critic have been answered already. Yet certain facts relevant to these issues seem to deserve our attention. Firstly, Mu. Va is essentially a Tamil scholar. Nothing can equal his love of Tamil. He does not sacrifice the purity of the language at the alter of realistic art. Secondly, the majority of characters in his novels are men of thoughts, and the emphasis of the novelist too is on their

thoughts. In short, the narrators of his novels are good thinkers with an emotional bent of mind. One can see in many places of his novels that these persons are spreading their thoughts in abundance. Velayyan in *Akal-vilakku,* Kulantaivel in *Vatamalar,* Vativu in *Nencil Oru Mul,* Tiruvenkatam in *Karit-tuntu,* Muttayyan in *Malar-vili,* Alli in *Alli* and Meyyappan in *Man-kuticai* - all these narrators are men of learning and thus their thoughts acquire primary importance. Consequently, their language becomes refined and this is employed in the novels. In *Perramanam, Kayamai* and *Pavai* the author himself narrates the story. In these novels he employs certain words suitable to the characters and narrates the story in his simple, elegant, inimitable style.

The speeches of certain characters bespeak of a new feature of his style. The novelist introduces Thiru. Vi. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar giving lectures on certain occasions. We come across him in *Vatamalar* and *Nencil Oru Mul* as a man who delivers lectures. The novelist who has moved with Thiru Vi. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar intimately, imbibes the spirit and style of his speech which comprises small sentences and simple words and is free from humour, satire and irony like a free flow of water in a tranquil stream. A portion of his speech here will make the point clear.

> "If we come across thieves and deceivers and hear about the murders we think of rehabilitating the world! Think in that line! Think of the ways and means of rehabilitating the society. Do as much as you can. Think that it is your obligation and duty. Nothing will happen by multiplying prisons and jails. Nothing will take place by simply increasing the number of courts. There will be no perceptable effect by strengthening the military forces." [36]

Thus he goes on lecturing for an hour and this covers more than ten pages of the novel. In this speech the style of the author is in imitation of the style of his master. The distinction between the two is conspicuous in the original.

Every artist aims at excellence. To achieve his legitimate ambitions he employs many techniques. Description of incidents and scenes that form the background is one such. In delineating an object the artist not only points out the beauty and nature of it but also concentrates on peripheral things, their colour, shape and position. For instance, a painter who wants to show a parrot in a picture paints it on a tree and in the midst of beautiful environment. Similarly the director who wants the stage a play arranges suitable background drops according to the situations. Even in poetry, as it is found in Cankam poems, portraying the background is an important feature. As far as the novel is concerned the background consists of the countryside and other places where the events take place. Such background or descriptions should well fit in the story and serve the purpose as the pillars of a building. Robert Liddell the well-known critic of fiction refers to this point : "There are only two ways of looking at the background in a novel. If it is looked at objectively, it must be seen only in so far as it explains the action like scenery in a play. The piling up of details for their own sake is tedious and irrelevant."[37] Therefore, the element of description in a novel should find such an important place that the reader should feel that without it the story might not have developed or the characters might not have been clearly brought out. The descriptions found in Mu. Va's novels can be classified as descriptions of nature and those of his characters.

The picturesque description of nature as found in Cankam poems has largely attracted his mind. Therefore it is but natural that such descriptions find a place in his novels. We can cite one description from *Akal-vilakku*

> "We have seen many a hill in our parts. But we have never seen such hills with thick growths, full of green bushes intertwined with creepers, hills with thick forests, hills so high as if they are touching the sky and hills placed in juxtaposition with altitudes. It was really a new sight to us because wherever we saw there were teak trees, jack trees, arecanut and plantain

> growths...I saw a forest river full of floods, its waves lashing against the rocks. When I looked to the opposite side I saw a snow-white water-fall coming down from the top of the hill and rushing to this side."[38]

This is how the novelist describes a mountain scene in Nilgiris. We can gather from this description that the author's style has acquired a new tenor and rhythm. A descriptive passage of this kind is bound to offer a sort of pleasing diversion to the reader.

The author sometimes makes us perceive the mental state of the character through his description. For example he shows the mental states and anxieties of grief-stricken Vativu deserted by her lover in the following description.

> "A cock made a kind of noise with a sense of pride by pecking something on the ground. When a hen came there running, the cock just then produced 'kik' 'kik' sound and then raising its head saw it with a sense of pride. The hen at that time pecked a large centipede by its beak. The centipede trembled for its life and began to crawl fast The hen pursued and pecked it. The cock raised its head and perceived the scene as if it has sacrificed something with great pleasure."[39]

Almost all poets both in the East and the Vest are thrilled by the sight of the full-moon and engrossed in its beauty. They have sung many songs and poems of imaginative value on this subject. No wonder the Tamil poets have evinced interest in this sight and celebrated it in ten beautiful verses as in *ampulipparuvam* in a *Prabandham* called *Pillait-tamil.* Mu. Va is no exception. whenever he happens to see the full-moon he does not fail to give an idea either about the society or about an individual in the course of his description of moon. The following two pieces will explain the statement.

"On that night the moon rose at 7 p.m, I saw a beautiful and colourful scene through a coconut grove in the east. It looked as if somebody decorated the grove. After a while white rays of light just made their appearance on the top of the grove. The clouds appeared in many groups in the sky as if they have gathered just to welcome the rising moon. The moon slowly rose up. The clouds then scattered and made an appearance as herds of rams. Within a short time the moon appeared in the midst of clouds which slowly were scattered like thousands of small heaps and sands. The moon made its appearance in the midst of those heaps as if a beautiful damsel shows her face........' Cantiran, I have never witnessed such a beautiful sight of moon in my life. Your father might have frequently enjoyed such beautiful sights in his life and that is how perhaps you have been named Cantiran".[40]

In this description the author not only describes the beauty of the moon but also points out the earlier life of Cantiran which resembled the waxing of the moon.

The following description is found in his novel *Karit-tuntu.*

"A giant-like cloud just devoured the beautiful moon into its stomach and remained in a spirit of self-conceit and vain glory. But the poor moon in its precarious state was making its journey inside the stomach of the cloud without showing even an iota of care and anxiety. Even in that fettered and confined condition it was shedding its light as best as it could to the world. At any time there will be an end to the influence of the cloud; the moon at that incident will bestow all its light to the world. But when it crossed the giant-like moon we do not know which other cloud will make its appearance to devour it. Will the moon which bestows the artful brilliance to the world not have its joyful life at any time in its life?"[41]

The author exposes in this description the life of artist Mokan who is subjected to poverty. The allegory implied in this

description is this : Just as the clouds hide the moon and spoil its beauty, the cloud of poverty in the life of Mokan obscures all his artistic talents and abilities.

Mu. Va is a clever artist who explains with ease even the intricate concepts of philosophy in a simplified manner to the average readers. The following description of a sea-shore by the author is an instance.

> "The electric bulbs on the posts were emanating their light around the posts only just as selfish people endowed with intelligence, wealth and power make use of all of them for their own use and for the use of their kith and kin. Innumerable cars were running on the roads as if to proclaim the truth that the world is moving endlessly. People were coming and going to the sandy shore and giving new appearances to it as if to explain that the world is making new histories by their continuous endless births and deaths of living beings. The rising and failing waves of the sea were explaining the immortal truth of the scriptures that all the living beings evolved from the Supreme Transcendental Power as evolutes of creation are again retracing their steps to the same Power and becoming involutes of destruction. The sight of their (waves') rising with undulating motion towards the shore appeared in white colour to the people at a distance as if they explained the fame of certain persons earned by a herculian task. The sight of the white waves with foams dashing against the sand and disappearing within a short moment reminds that the fame too will for sometime exist and then fade in the sands of time. The vast expanse of the sea which is beyond the span of the human eye was in a state of tranquillity just as the transcendent God is beyond the conception of the human mind." [42]

Whenever a novelist introduces characters he describes their external appearances. The advantage of this is that the characters are easily remembered and also identified by the readers, whenever they make their reappearance in any part

of the story. It is the characteristic of Mu. Va that he gives an elaborate description of the external appearance of his characters in his novels. For example:

> " My friend Annamalai's face came and stood before my mental eye. The handsomeness which prevailed in his younger days was unabated even after he completed his school career; on the other hand it had attained its full growth. His cares and anxieties in life did not wither it. The child-like innocence was beaming in his face. After sometime when I thought of him the picture of his sparkling eyes, the broad fore-head, his bent eye-brows with dense black hair, his well-formed nose, coral lips neatly arranged pearl-like teeth, cheeks and ears as if seen in a picture, well-dressed cropped hair, tenderness running throughout his body as if to render beauty to all these aspects stated above, tender long hands with beautiful fingers reminding those of women, beautiful nails like the beaks of parrot and above all his sweetness of tranquil speech came into my mind."[43]

This is how Mu. Va describes a character in his novel.

When he describes women in his novels he formulates certain principles and follows them without any deviation. Whether he describes odious women or ideal women he never goes to the extent of giving detailed description of each and every part of their body lest the attention of the young readers should be diverted. The descriptions of Menmoli, Parvati, Vaceekaram shown elsewhere in this thesis can be cited as instances to explain this trend of description.

Generally in a novel which is a masterpiece, symbolism finds a place and enhances its value. " The most common kind of symbol in fiction" state R.F. Deitrich and R.S. Sundell, " is an image that serves not only as an important part of a description but also a sign of something else ".[44] In Mu. Va's fiction even the titles of certain novels as for example *Nencil Oru Mul*, *Akal-vilakku*, *Vatamalar* and *Man-kuticai* are symbolic. Even the names of characters such as Cantiran, Malan,

Centamarai serve as symbols. Symbolism can be seen even in his descriptions Following are the instances.

In the closing part of *Vatamalar* certain worker; attempt to remove amaranth plants (Compherena globosa) thinking they are of no use. At that time the teacher Murukayya intervenes and says:

> "Don't scrap away the flower plants. When I see those flowers my mind grieves very much. It seems those flowers speak to me. They tell me something about life; they indicate many many things of life."[45]

These lines of Murukayya refer obliquely to the life of Tanappan in that novel. No doubt his life is identical with the life of amaranth flower; it may not be of any use to others. But his experiences of life may serve as warning to others.

Let us take a description in *Man-kuticai* as another example of symbolism in his novels. The novelist through the mouth of Meykantar describes a hut as follows:

> "Have you seen this house? (hut) Have a good look...Go and see around it...what a trouble to undergo by living in it! Bandicoots, rats, centipedes, white ants and other insects may give trouble besides the nuisance created by cyclones and rain. Instead of living in these mud-huts people may prefer to live in old caves. Or they may live in good houses built with granite stones, mortar and cement Living in this hut is living between the two extremes, that is the cave and the well-built house."[46]

This description of a hut represents symbolically the present day society. The rats and bandicoots make holes in the hut which affect its very foundation Similarly there are certain black sheep in the society and these try to spoil its structure. Just as the people living in the mud-hut are affected so also the common people in the society undergo untold difficulties. Therefore, the novelist desires that the whole structure of the society should be remodelled from its very base.

Satire finds a prominent place in the novels of a reformist. Students of English fiction are aware of Charles Dickens as a satirist. "Throughout his life" says Martin Fido, "Dickens was interested in public affairs, and although his popular reputation may, to some extent, have exaggerated the progressive or radical quality of thinking, he certainly did write forcibly against a number of official abuses, and, by and large, was regarded throughout his life-time as a friend of the poor and a dangerous enemy to certain types of public servants."[47] What is said of Dickens by the English critic in these lines can be applied to Mu. Va who used satire as his weapon to remove the social evils, to wipe out the ignorance prevailing in society, to attack the economic loopholes of the society and to point out the currupt practices of politicians.

The satirical elements that are scattered in his novels can be classified under five categories viz., (1) Political satire (2) Social satire, (3) Satire on religion and superstitious beliefs, (4) Satire on Tamil society in particular and (5) Satire on present day education.

(1) Political Satire :

Whether the government is by the people or by one man it is the duty of the writer to point out the pit-falls, if any, in the administration. A writer who has a reformist attitude should first free himself from the fetters of party feelings, communal feelings and from other prejadices. Then only he becomes a true satirist. His writings will have a good reception from the public and his ideas will have some value. Mu. Va can be called for all practical purposes an importial satirist. His novel *Kayamai* can be considered as an example of political satire. He points out in *Kayamai* all the atrocities of politicians, the cunning roles they play, the development of cheating tendencies as an art in them and the malpractices they adopt in elections by the creation of such characters as Muniappa, Kanakalinkam, Tankacami all in a spirit of satire. As a clerk in a office in his younger days Mu. Va might have noticed many evil practices that were prevalent. Mu. Va exposes all the evil practices by the creation of Anavar. In the words of Kanakalinkam the author says ;

"If you do not know how to abuse the other party, the people in your party will not believe you. Heaping of abuses after abuses against the opposite party is like performing baptism on one. You should have no reservation in the matter of heaping abuses. Don't worry about others. If you continue to do so then only people will believe you." [48]

This advice of Kanakalinkam directed to Tankacami is a good example of political satire that exposes the true colour of politicians.

(2) Social Satire :

When he observes keenly many of the social evils and superstitious beliefs, Mu. Va records them with a note which smacks of satire. The author satirizes in the following words the belief prevailing in Tamil Nadu that women wedded to kitchen should confine themselves to it and act as submissive servant-miads.

"No Tolkappiyar has recorded that one should end a sentence without a verb by stating one word here and another word there, by bending one's head with a side-way glance." [49]

The author who has observed commercial practices and the motives of money-hunt generally prevailing in society in matters of seeking alliances, indignantly states as follows :

"We boast of ourselves because we live in a country where great men were born, where many sacred books were written, where many great temples were built and institutions of public charity were established. We also boast ourselves that only our country is aspiring for other worldliness whereas other countries are aspiring for this worldliness. But we cannot say that in any other country educated youngmen and cultured women are commercialised for the sake of maney only as found in our country. When one hears the exchange of words among people at the time of marriage functions

one's mouth will shun to utter that our country is the only country heading towards spirituality."[50]

(3) Satire on religion :

Mu. Va is no religionist but a pious man. He has an implicit faith in the Supreme Being. He is of strong conviction that the Supreme Power need not be worshipped in temples as our physical body itself is a temple. Thus he echoes the sentiments of Tirumular. Mu. Va disapproves of any person who commits atrocities under the garb of a religion. He looks with suspicion at those who worship God by offering coconuts and plantains but fail to obey His commands. He records his mild satire of those who long for the recognition of their fame.

> "O Lord Muruka! My tongue will not sing any thing except your glory" – thus they make their vain statements but inscribe their own names on the steps of the temples."[51]

This reference of the author to the pseudo-religionist embodies a mild satire.

(4) Satire on Tamil Society tn Particular :

Mu. Va makes reference in many places to Tamilians who suffer from false sense of honour in abundance. He digs at the Tamilians who though endowed with ability and intelligence to while away their time by wandering like beggars.

> "At that time two young Tamil boys rushed to the dust-bin where the leaves after eating were thrown. Two dogs also came there for the leaves and escaped from the clutches of the boys.'[52]

* * *

> "The Tamilians are the only people in the world who are trained in wearing minimum clothing. Should they not wear even the four cubits of cloth clean and untorned?"[53]

The Tamilians talk too much and spoil themselves by developing separatism as an art. He refers to such people as follows:

> "These people (Tamilians) carry on research on the chastity of citai and Kannaki but disappointed in the real political life, they divide themselves in two groups and in due course these two divide into twenty small groups......How can they prosper in becoming united when they develop separatism as an art? These Tamilians are self-destroying regiments "[54]

The novelist is provoked to say these words when he thinks of the pathetic conditions of Tamilians in Tamil Nadu.

(5) *Satire on present-day education :*

Mu Va. has a rich experience in the field of education. Of his innumerable references, direct or indirect, to the defects of the present day educational system, the following satirical reference to the pitiable conditions of educated youths catches our attention.

> " As the young graduates are seen in their pensive mood about their dim and dismal future, I was standing for the next bus anxiously wondering whether I can get a room in it."[55]

Mu Va is a unique personality among the Tamil novelists. His style is one of the many aspects which make him unique. The virtue of his style is the element of balance. He is never given to the indiscriminate use of colloquial words, slangs and words with dialectical variations in his writings. He does not want to captivate the minds of his readers by freely employing such words and showing thereby that it is the only realistic art; nor does he want to spoil the purity of the language. He does not use archaic and outmoded words of the ancient Tamil and try to establish that they alone form pure Tamil. He has tried his best to convey his ideas to the readers without spoiling the artistic taste and purity of the

language through the art of fiction. "Style is perfect when the communication of the thought or emotion is exactly accomplished; its position in the scale of absolute greatness, however, will depend upon the comprehensiveness of the system of emotions and thoughts to which the reference is perceptible."[56] This statement of Middleton Murry is by all means applicable to Mu. Va's style.

NOTES :

1, Watter Pater: *An Essay on Style* quoted by Herbert Read: In his book *English Prose Style*, p. 159.
2. *Style*, p. 16.
3. ibid, p. 11.
4. *Anatomy of Criticism*, p. 268.
5. *The Problem of Style*, p 4.
6. *Nencil Oru Mul*, p. 448.
7. *Alli*, p 130.
8. *The Problem of Style*, p. 7.
9. *Yan. Kanta Mu, Va.*, pp. 133-144.
10. *Vatamalar*, pp, 308-309.
11. *Antanal*, p. 63.
12. *The Problem of Style*, p. 7,
13. *Akam*, p. 34.
14 *A History of Tamil Literature*, p, 182.
15. *The Problem of Style*, p. 65.
16. *Kayamai*; p. 217.
17. *Akal vilakku*, pp. 42 and 88.
18. *Malarvili*, p. 63.
19. *Alli*. pp. 107-108.
20. *Three Genres - The Writing of Fiction, Poetry, Drama*'', p. 90.
21. *Dr.Mu Va.*, p. 44.
22. *Alli*, pp. 129-146.
23. ibid. pp. 266-277.
24. *Kayamai*, pp. 94-106.
25. ibid. pp. 321-330.
26. ibid. pp. 49-59.
27. *Karittuntu*, pp. 193-212.
28. ibid. p. 120.
29. *Centamarai*, pp. 83-85.
30 *A Glossary for the Study of English*, p. 64.
31. *Great Novelists and their Novels*, p. 6.
32. *Technique in Ftction*, p. 54.
33. *Ilakkiya Marapu*, p. 133.
34. *Malar-vili*, pp. 62-63.
35. *Modernity and Contemporary Indian Literature* (Proceedings of a Seminar), Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla 1968.
36. *Vatamalar*, p. 223.
37. *A treatise on the Novel*, p. 127.
38. *Akal-Vilakku*, p. 231.
39, *Nencil Oru Mul*, pp. 16-17.
40. *Akal-vilakku*, p. 59.
41. *Karit-tuntu*, pp. 32-33.
42. *Kayamai*, pp. 342-343.
43. *Malarvili*, p. 65.

44. *The Art of Fiction*, p. 142.
45. *Vatamalar*, p. 352.
46. *Man-kuticai*, p. 441.
47. *Charles Dickens*, p. 33.
48. *Kayamai*, p. 134.
49. *Centamarai*, p. 20.
50. *Akal-vilakku*, p. 276.
51. *Perramanam*, p. 287.
52. *Vata-malar*, p. 185.
53. *Antanal*, p 154.
54. *Alli*, p. 311.
55. ibid, p. 183.
56. *The Problem of Style*, p. 65.

CHAPTER VIII

TECHNIQUE OF NARRATION

The novel is, at present, universally recognised as one of the great historic forms of literary art. Its resources and capacity appear to be commensurate with the realities of consciousness of the modern epoch. Alongside of the development of novel, literary criticism on fiction has developed. Modern criticism through its exact scrutiny of literary texts has demonstrated with finality that in art beauty and truth are indivisible. The Keatsian overtone of these terms is mitigated and an old dilemma solved if for beauty we substitute form, and for truth content. We may, without risk of loss, narrow them even more and speak in terms of technique and subject matter. According to modern criticism to speak of content as such is not to speak of art at all, but of experience; it is only when we speak of the *achieved* content, the form, the work of art as a work of art that we speak as critics. The difference between content, or experience, and achieved content, or art, is technique.

When we speak of technique it means that we speak of nearly everything. In fiction, for example, there would be no story, no meaning, no subject matter, no interpretation of life without technique. For technique is the means by which the writer's experience, which is his subject matter, is communicated. Technique is the only means he has of discovering, exploring, developing his subject, of conveying its meaning, and, finally, of evaluating it. And surely it follows that certain techniques are sharper tools than others, and have greater possibilities; that the writer who has various kinds of technique at his beck and call to present his subject matter will produce works with a rich content, works with resonance and reverberation and works with great wealth of meaning.

By way of studying the novels of Mu. Va, it has already been pointed out certain aspects of technique in chapters on

characterization, plot construction and style. In this chapter certain other aspects more concerned with technique of narration such as point of view, epistles and diaries, flash-back, foreshadowing, interior monologue and intrusion of the author have been explored.

1. Point of View

There are many aspects of novelistic technique dealing with 'plot', 'characterization', 'setting', 'dialogue', 'symbolism' and 'style' and all these aspects help the novelist to achieve his purpose. The aspect fundamental to all the component parts of a novel is the method of narration employed. The critics of fiction call this method the 'point of view' by which the novelist tells his story. The phrase 'point of view' has received much critical attention in recent times. But the novelists in general, have, of course, been concerned with it right from the beginning. "The whole intricate question of method", observes Percy Lubbock, "in the craft of fiction, take to be governed by the question of the point of view—the question of relation in which the narrator stand to the story".[1] Hence, the art of communication or narration is the *sine que non* of a novel. The choice of the narrator determines the 'point of view'.

I would like to explore a few of the main 'points of view' which generally novelists have chosen, to suggest not only the nature of the point of view' but something of its significance in the achievement of the novelists' purposes. Critics of modern fiction classify the points of view generally into two categories, namely (1) Omniscient point of view and (2) Limited point of view. The method of narration in which the narrator appears to know everything employs the Omniscient point of view. The reader is not conscious of the personality of the narrator, nor is he disturbed by the narrator's ability to depict the private thoughts of various characters, because this omniscience is only a convention, an improbable device which we have come to accept as a part of story-telling. The Omniscient point of view may be either *editorial* or *objective*. If the point of view is *editorial-Omni-*

scient the narrator will comment upon action by drawing our attention to its significance and by evaluating the behaviour of the characters. He will probably blend expository and dramatic characterization.

It may be pointed out that among the novels of Mu Va, the editorial-Omniscient point of view has been employed in *Kayamai* and *Pavai*. In the former the novelist himself introduces Anavar to us. He describes the external features of Anavar and how he conducts himself with the other clerks in the office subordinate to him. Besides this, Anavar's thoughts in the sub-concious mind and his secret designs are clear to us as the novelist explains them by the omniscient point of view. He portrays his characters in detached manner and dissects their passions, motives, thoughts and feelings. More often than not, he pronounces authoritative judgement upon Anavar, Kanakalinkam, Vaceekaram, Menmoli and Nallayyan. Following is an example from *Kayamai :*

> "Kanakalinkam is a friend of Anavar from his younger days. Like Anavar he was also brought up in such a way that his physical features and temperamental qualities develop somewhat rudely. He follows more or less the same principles in his life. In other words, he follows flexible principles so that he can prosper somehow in life." [2]

In addition to this expository method the novelist employs the drametic method in portraying the characters of Anavar and Kanakalinkam. He stands apart and allows these characters to reveal themselves through their speech and action, and reinforces their self-delineation by the comments and judgements of other characters in the novel. The dialogue that takes place between Anavar and Kanakalinkam reveals their characters. In addition to this Venkatecan's remarks about Anavar throws light on the latter's character. Similarly in *Pavai* the novelist himself narrates the story in the first three or four chapters. Then he introduces the dialogue between Palani and Ekampara Cettiyar, Ekampara Cettiar and Maniyakkarar, among Kannappar, Palani and Pavai and then continues his narration.

In *Perramanam* the novelist has employed the objective omniscient point of view. When the omniscient narrator refrains from any coment on the action, his presentation is said to be objective, even though we recognise that through selection and arrangement he can still manipulate the story to demonstrate his point. In *Perramanam* even though Mu. Va introduces dialogues between Temoli and Ciralar and between Temoli and Kantan, the author as omniscient narrator dominates the narration. Hence it may be brought under the objective omniscient point of view. We learn more about the character of Muniyamma the heroine of the story from her speech and action. The author tells us only a little obout her.

There are certain advantages for the author if he employs the omnicient point of view. It is obvious that the omniscient point of view confers greater freedom on the narrator. He can produce any useful bit of information without referring to his source. He can move as he likes all through and round the arena of action to give the reader a detailed, fully developed and three dimensional picture in motion. If in addition he chooses to editorialize he can make his point clear. But generally the author wishes to deny the narrator any of this great freedom and power. This is because every voluntarily assumed limitation in the point of view increases the illusion of actuality and our sense of immediate involvement in the action. When the omniscient narrator remains objective, events may seem to unfold themselves, or, at least we are not frequently reminded of the author's shaping hand. Through the editorial omniscient point of view we may be too much aware of the presiding personality of the narrator and we may remember distinctly that the story is an invention and that we are reading a contrived imitation of life. This handicap is inherent in it. The advantage of certain detachment, or *aesthetic distance*, is that it permits a reader to view matters objectively.

In the light of the above statement the three novels *Kayamai*, *Perramanam* and *Pavai* may be examined. In *Kayamai* Anavar, Kanakalinkam, Venkatecan and Nallayyan

are the significant characters. The author might have employed any one of these characters as narrator or all of them by shifting the point of view from one to the other. But he did not do so. The following reasons may be adduced for this arrangement. Had Anavar been made the narrator, all the details that are found in the story in the present form might not have been there. It would not have been possible for the novelist to throw light on all the conflicts and evil designs of Anavar through Anavar alone. Even if he had employed Anavar as the sole narrator, the novel would not have acquired realistic touches. Even Kanakalinkam, Venkatecan and Nallayyan might not have narrated so realistically as the author himself narrated it from the omniscient point of view. Therefore, the method employed by the author seems to be suitable and proper. Besides this the employment of dramatic method adds beauty to the narration Similarly, it is not possible for the love-smitten people to express the pure and fine feelings of love. But they can communicate them in writing and thus their love-letters grip the attention of the readers Perhaps the author has thought that it may not be possible for the love-lorn Pavai and Palani to narrate the story. That may be the reason for the author to play the role of a narrator. In *Perramanam* the story is narrated from the omniscient point of view. The following reason may be adduced for the author's method. In this novel the heroine Muniyamma, her son Muttan and Temoli are noteworthy characters The details regarding Muniyamma's motherhood, how she has been ridiculed by others in a state when she had lost her child, how she undergoes the untold sufferings as a servant-maid occupy the greater part of the novel. The author Might have made the heroine Muniyamma narrate all these details. But we know she is an illiterate woman and not worldly wise. If she had been made a narrator, the story might not have appeared as realistic as it does now. One may think that Temoli might have been made the narrator of the story. But this is not possible beeause she does not know Muniyamma from the beginning. She meets Muniyamma only at the end. Had Muttan played the role of a narrator, he could not have picturesquely brought out the motherly feeling of Muniyamma and other intricate feelings of other characters. Hence we can

conclude that the author scrupulously avoids choosing any one of them ns the narrator. "Thus, if the novelist wishes to comment indirectly on aspects of the situation which seem to him important or significant, he often has to give prominence to the meditations of characters endowed with a high degree of perceptiveness and self-expression."[3] This statement of Miriam Allott corroborates my reasoning. We will now consider the various types of limited point of view.

Protagonist-narrator point of view :

In the protagonist-narrator point of view the story is narrated by the hero or heroine of the story. Among Mu. Va's novels this type of point of view has been employed in *Alli*, *Nencil Oru Mul* and *Man-kuticai* which mainly deal with the internal conflicts of the protagonists. No other method is better suited than this when the author wants to portray the internal feelings of the protagonists. Let us take for example *Nencil Oru Mul* Here the heroine of the story Vativu exposes her internal conflicts in the following manner.

> "I did not expect that a new conflict will start in this way. I worried myself that the blunder committed by me had not only affected me but also my only son. I thought of many things and was much confused. Then I could not talk with anybody. My mind was gripped by agonising experience . Just as somebody has spoiled my life of love at a very early age I grieved very much for being a party to spoil the life of an innocent and good girl and thereby shatter her unalloyed carefree mind ..... I cannot fathom the immense gravity of my mental grief ... There were always bad and sorrowful thoughts rising in my mind as if lava is successively coming out by the eruption of a volcano. There was roaring grief even in my subconscious and unconscious mind."[4]

The mental conflict embodied in the above passage (by Vativu) cannot be narrated better by any other character. It is a matter of common knowledge that the feelings or the mental

conflicts of anyone can be expressed only by himself and not by a third person. As an astute critic of literature Mu. Va has understood this truth and moulded these three novels mainly dealing with the mental conflicts by the protagonist-narrator point of view.

This method has certain merits as well as demerits. We are reminded at this stage of the statement of the literary critic John E. Tilford, Jr. who says: "The narrator can fairly report only what he says and does and what he hears and sees others saying and doing. But in longer and more complex novels......authors have to use all manner of devices so that the narrator can report, as necessary, other characters' thoughts and events he does not see; intercepted letters, overheard conversations, other characters' accounts and often the manifestation of considerable naivete on the part of the narrator."[5] This idea serves as an explanation for what has been revealed in *Alli* by the author. In this novel the heroine of the novel, Dr. Alli herself narrates the story. In this story we cannot understand Cuppurattinam, Inpavalli, Comu, or Dr. Paramecuvari as much as we understand Alli directly the reason being that she could not study and express the mental conflicts of other characters. Therefore, the author exposes the secrets of those characters by their epistles, diaries and by the overheard conversation. Comu's mental conflicts are pictured by his notes in his diary.[6] We cannot understand the love of Inpavalli for Aravali until one of her letters to Dr. Alli reveals it. This is because the narrator herself is not aware of it. Lastly the fact is known when Alli opens Inpavalli's letter[7] and learns about it. Similarly, the characteristics of Cuppurattinam are know by his actions to some extent, but a major part of his secrets is known only by his letter[8] addressed to Culocana. The details regarding his repentance of his bad actions and a complete change of his nature as a polished gentleman are revealed through his jottings in his diary,[9] and also by comments of other characters. The third novel *Mankuticai* also contains the similar disadvantage. Though we understand the conflict of Meyyappan, the hero of the novel, by his narration, we cannot understand the thoughts of other characters like Kecavarayan and his friends, which remain in

their sub-conscious state. When Meyyappan in the form of an invisible person overhears their dialogues we are in a position to be aware of their thoughts.

Hero–Heroine narrating the story in the first person :

In this method the main characters of the story narrate the story alternately. Sometimes there are advantages in narrating the story alternately. In order to find a solution for a problem or to understand the theme of the story it is always good to have the story narrated by those who are associated with the problem. With this view in mind Mu. Va seems to have adopted the technique of narrating the story in *Kallo? Kaviyamo?* by shifting the point of view from character to character. This novel portrays a family problem. The husband Arulappar and his wife Mankai narrate the story alternately. A casual misunderstanding between husband and wife shatters the harmonious life of the family. In a novel like *Kallo? Kaviyamo?* which deals with the intricate problems of family it is proper that Mankai and the Arulappar who are involved in such complications narrate the story. Another reason may also be adduced for the novelist's use of this technique. It may be persumed that the novelist who has mastered the theory of *Akam* literature in Tamil might have thought that it is improper on the part of a third person to know and interfere in the personnal life of a husband and wife. In the words of Arulappa's father " Even the teacher, the parents and the grown-up children are all third persons in the personal life of husband and wife." [10] Therefore one is led to think that the author has deliberately made the protagonists narrate the story directly. He does not choose to get story narrated either in the omniscient point of view or by the other characters. The third reason is, as Carter Colwel has pointed out, that point of view is frequently relevant to theme.[11] Therefore it may be said that Mu. Va has employed this technique to din into the ears of the readers the significanse of the theme of the story. 'One's patience is the friendship of two' is a Tamil saying which is the basis of the novel *Kallo? Kaviyamo?* It is applicable to the novel in which the author has made Arulappar who loses patience

in order to keep up the false prestige and his wife Mankai narrate the story alternately. The following two excerpts from the statements of Arulappar and Mankai depict the ability of the author in explaining the theme of the novel as well as the relevance of this technique.

When the complications of the family are talked out by husband and wife rather loudly and alternately we are clearly aware of the family condition.

> Arulappar narrates: "As was said by her the thought that she was a servant-maid was working in a corner of mind. Therefore it came out at the opportune moment ....It is sufficient for me if she shows some respect to me. Similarly, it is sufficient for her if I show some respect for her. It does not matter much if my friend respects me or for that matter the world respects me This does not create any real love in me.........That being so sought the respect of others. That false notion was the phantom that harboured in my mind that night.........The family life disintegrates by the interference of the out-sider."[12]

This frank statement of Arulappar makes us understand not only the defects of his but also the theme of the novel in a way.

> Mankai narrates: "The development of intelect in me had become a Himalayan blunder. As my intellect was very sharp, I began to ponder over the various possibilities. If there was no such intellect in me I would have been care-free (with Arullappar at Madras) my mind concentrating on that only thought and my eyes full of tears. That fine sharp intellect... created in my mind many new complications."[13]

This statement of Mankai makes us realise the great truth that a harmonious family life will be affected if real love is replaced by intellect and reasoning. Thus it is fitting and proper for members of the family who are involved in compli-

cations to play the roles of narrators of the story in the novel which is based on the family complications.

Multiple points of view – Narration by different characters :

In this point of view the main characters in the story are made to narrate the story one after another. Generally, this method of narrating the story was first employed by English novelists of eighteenth century. Mu. Va has employed this technique in two of his novels *Antanal* and *Centamarai*. It makes me think that there must be some basis for the novelist for adopting this mode of presentation in these two novels, In these two novels, the author, I am to surmise, wants to emphasis one concept in each of the novels. It is crystal clear that the author emphasises the various atrocities that naturally arise through a war in *Antanal* and in *Centamarai* he pin-points different types of love leading to marriage. Thus, if different persons are made to express their own ideas on a subject the merits and demerits of the subject and also the fundamental truth about it are discussed thread-bare It is a matter of common knowledge in these days that different persons are made to present their own views on the same subject in a symposium or a seminar. In the same way in *Antanal* the ramifications of the argument on war are presented by Arumukam, Ponmuti, Kunamalai, Nilamekan and Vani the main character of the story. We are made to understand by the narration of Arumukam and Ponmuti how an ideal family suffers.

> Many a person met their 'scientific deaths' on the mountain-slopes. Such deaths should be euphemistically denoted by a special terminology 'scientific death' and included in the dictionary. One should test in such a way whether the scientists feel shame. One should also see whether the scientists with sense of honour and humanism in them will deter from helping to such a horrible destruction."[14]

This satirical comment of Nilamekan obliquely points out the piling up of modern scientific equipments for the total

annihilation of humanity in the name of scientific advancement. Similarly the novelist emphasises the theme through the narrations of Vani, Ponmuti and Kunamalai.

We can adduce another reason in addition to the one stated above. One can easily estimate the qualities of these characters by their own utterances and also by the views expressed on these characters by others. Students of English fiction are aware of the fact that Virginia Woolf has succeeded in employing this technique of narration. While making a reference to this mode of narration Joan Bennet states: "Virginia Woolf was not content with the record of a single mind. She wanted also to communicate the impression made by one individual upon others and to reveal human personality partly through its own self-consciousness and partly through the picture projected by it upon other minds."[15] Mu. Va's *Centamarai* is the best example in which this mode of narration is successfully employed. In the novel in which love is its theme, the author points out various types of love, how it takes a turn in each stage and describes beautifully the characteristic features of different persons in the novel. Therefore, this novel can be called a 'novel of character'. In this novel Tilakam, Ilanko, Marutappan, Centamarai and Tirunatan narrate the story one after another. But we cannot assess the character of any narrator by his or her statement only, nor can we do so by the statement of other narrators. From the statement of every one we are able to understand not only what is in the sub-conscious mind of the narrator but also his estimate of other characters. When Tilakam narrates the story we are able to understand a great deal about Centamarai, Ilanko, Tirunatan and Marutappan. Similarly when Centamarai narrates the story we are able to understand not only about Tilakam, Tirunatan, Ilanko and Marutappan but also about the love episodes of Centamarai. Therefore, in a 'novel of character' this mode of presentation by the characters themselves one after another finds a more fitting place than any other method of narration and Mu. Va has successfully handled this mode.

Narrator-Minor participant - Witness point of view :

In this mode of narration a character closely associated with the protagonist is made to narrate the story. Generally, this character will be an eye-witness to the actions of the protagonist as well as some other incidents connected with him. John E. Tilford, Jr. explains the merits of this point of view as follows: "The narrator-minor participant-witness point of view provides a consistent, compelling focus for the action, and his commentary and evaluation, from his point of view, allow him to serve as a kind of guide to the readers. Finally, this method may add to the complexity of the story and increase its possibilities for richness."[16] Among the novels of Mu. Va *Akal-vilakku* and *Vatamalar* are the best examples where this point of view has been adroitly handled.

In *Akal-vilakku* we hear the story narrated by Velayyan a close associate of Cantiran. We witness another incident through Velayyan. Even though the author makes other characters speak dramatically, he invariably points out the opinion of Velayyan and his judgement about the actions of Cantiran. We can point out for example the reaction of Velayyan when Cantiran threatens the poor girls and makes them sing songs.

> "I do not like Cantiran has conducted himself and also asked the girls to sing songs by giving them some tips."[17]

This was the quick reaction of the narrator Velayyan. Similarly the statements of Velayyan about Pakkiyam Ammal, Malan and Karpakam enable us to know those characters in detail.

This technique entails certain demerits also. At the outset it is difficult to assess definitely the characteristic features of a character. We are forced to rely on the judgement of the narrator who describes every minor incident. An example in *Akal-vilakku* makes my point clear. When Velayyan refers to Pakkiyam Ammal he always points out

her good qualities only. But on the other hand Cantiran who associates himself with that lady states that the lady had thought of conducting herself with amorous intention and that is why he has receded from her. But Velayyan shows his dislike for him by stating that it is an undesirable quality of Cantiran to slander each and every woman regardless of their age as if they are inclined to love him.[18] If we place the early utterances[19] of Velayyan in juxtaposition with the views mentioned above we are confused whether there is any black-spot in the character of Pakkiyam Ammal or Cantiran himself is inherently bad, We are at a loss to judge as to which of the statements of Cantiran and Velayyan is correct.

Narrator–Minor Participant–Commentator through hearsay:

According to this point of view any one who figures in the novel can narrate the story. We need not insist on his intimate relationship with the protagonist. At the beginning of the story he might have had some contacts with the protagonist for one reason or other. Among the novels of Mu. Va, *Karit-tuntu* and *Malarvili* can be cited as instances bearing this point of view. In *Karit-tuntu* Tiruvenkatam narrates the sotry and in *Maravili* Muttayya does it. Both these characters portary many events connected with the life of the protagonist that have not been witnessed by them. Mu. Va has employed some subtle technique to connect these characters with the protagonist. Muttayya in *Malarvili* is a character who secured a job in the Railway Department through the influence of Collector Celvanayakam. Therefore, he frequently meets the Collector by way of expressing his gratitude. He speaks to his friends highly about Collector Celvanayakam, his nobility and his family life. He hears with keen attention the conversation of person in the railway carriages and other places. He is also eager to know all about the Collector through some of his friends Such an emotional attachment with the Collector helps him to narrate the story in different points of view. Similarly, Tiruvenkatam in *Karit-tuntu* develops a special affection, and respect for the artist Mokan The beauty of the art created by the lame artist with the help of an ordinary piece of charcoal, the calm

and affectionate look beaming in his face and the absence of the usual pride generally found in any artist are of immense fascination to Tiruvenkatam who thinks that there must be something hidden in his life and thus becomes inquisitive enough to try to learn that secret. He, therefore, frequently pays visit, to the artist's hut. His affectionate talk with the artist and his familiarity with him help him to learn about many secret events that have taken place in his early life which he reveals in the course of his narration. This is how these narrators come into contact with the protagonists on some occasion or the other.

Even in this point of view we face certain defects. Here too it is not possible for us to learn everything through the narrator. In order to command a comprehensive view of the qualities of the protagonists we ought to invoke the aid of other characters. Let us consider an example in *Malarvili* to explain this point. In this novel if we take into our consideration only the statements of Muttayya we become blind to the loopholes of Kancanai. When Muttayya had the chance of looking at Kancanai for the first time, her external features had created in him a very good impression about her conduct. Therefore, he strongly believes that she could not have had clandestine relationship with Nakanatan. As he has an unusual affection and esteem for Celvanayakam he always talks about his good qualities only even though there are certain defects in the latter. But the novelist reveals these defects through Mani, Annamalai and Malaik-kannar. Similarly in *Karit-tuntu* the narrator Tiruvenkatam is not in a position to throw light on the previous life of Nirmala. But we are able to know it from the letter of Nirmala as well as from the statement of the artist.

2. Epistles and Diaries

Some novelists narrate the story through epistles and diaries. This form of technique was generally in vogue in eighteenth century. Richardson's, *Clarissa*, Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker* are the novels written in the form of letters. Such novels go by the name '*Epistolary Novels*'. In Tamil

novel literature, *Kokilampal Katitankal* of Maraimalai Atikal is the best instance of this type of novel. Even though Mu. Va has not employed the technique in toto he makes use of letters as instrument for the narration of the story in certain places The letter written by Nirmala to Prof. Kamalakkannar is the best instance. This letter approximately running into forty pages, embodies a large portion of the story of the novel *Karit-tuntu*. The narration of earlier life by Mokan to Tiruvenkatam in jail and Nirmala's letter serve as the two main sources of the story. The artist Mokan narrates the first part while Nirmala's letter reveals the second part of the story. Nirmala begins the story where Mokan ends it. We learn about many events that make the construction of the story through Nirmala's letter. We are able to learn such details as Nirmala's parentage and her early life, the chaos in the family about her marriage, her life in her brother's house, her registered marriage with artist Mokan, the details regarding the lady Maturi whom Mokan loved previously, her family life with Mokan at Calcutta, her dislike of the family-life later, the event of her going to Bombay after deserting her husband who loses his legs in an accident, her friendship with Centamarai and Ilanko at Matunga, her meeting of Prof. Kamalakkannar and her association with him later. Besides this, the letter reveals that Nirmala has turned a new leaf in her life and has become an ideal Tamil woman. Similarly, in *Man-kuticai* the letter of Meykantar to Meyyappan reveals the philosophy of the former and at the same time exposes his life-history. A portion of that letter will explain this.

> "Kecavarayan is my relative. Don't divulge this fact to anybody. Don't explain my previous life-history to anyone. He is the son-in-law of my elder brother His wife was brought up in my house as my own daughter. She became his wife. But Kecavarayan did harm to me. My wife was aggrieved very much. I was not affected. Therefore still I live."[20]

This except from his letter rather explains that he is not only a man of wisdom but also an indispensable character in the novel. Similarly the seven letters of Kanaku to Tanappan in

Vatamalar not only reveal her characteristics but also serve as an explanation for the nature of the conclusion of the story.

Readers of Mu. Va's novels will readily remember to glance the two significant diaries in *Alli,* one of Comu and another of Cuppurattinam. Whenever Mu. Va refers to any diary in his novels, it is generally of those characters who have at first gone astray but later turned a new leaf in their life. In such diaries one can notice certain notes of confidential nature or certain references which are abominable to the readers. From Comu's diary one can understand the intensity of his sexual feelings which is the main reason for his deterioration in health and from Cuppurattinam's diary we are able to understand many intricate ideas about sex. Thus Mu. Va is successful in revealing many internal and ineffable feelings of certain characters by making use of their diaries.

3. Flashback Technique

"A flash back is a transposition from the narrative present to the narrative past."[21] In fiction an author rarely portrays his action in a completely chronological manner. More often than not, he describes first an incident that has occurred shortly after the conflict has begun. In this way, he captures the attention of the reader and inculcates a sense of deep interest in him. Once the reader's attention is caught, the author can risk going back in order to provide the essential details that form the background, the interest of which is greater because the reader now knows what roles the character will play and what conflicts the otherwise meaningless events will produce. This going back may be accomplished by the piecemeal reminiscences of the narrator or by a summary of antecedent events by an omniscient author. When the entire scene is shifted to an earlier time, action is dramatically presented, and the device is known as a *flash-back.* Such shifts are very frequently used to fill in exposition in the earlier stages of the story, but they also be used later at any point where the author wishes to furnish relevant explanatory details.

As Mu. Va has employed this flash back technique in some of his novels we can cite two instances, one in *Karit-tuntu* and another in *Kayamai*. We can call the technique employed in *Kayamai* as 'flash-back in the form of interior monologue' and that employed in *Karit-tuntu* plain flash back. The first technique had been employed by the author very successfully in *Kayamai*. In this story the author who portrays the relationship between Anvar and Vaceekaram does not explain, even at the beginning the various events which led to their relationship. On the other hand, he introduces them only after their relationship attains the maturity. But he shows Vaceekaram in the corner of E.P. Lodge reminiscing and thus reveals how their relationship had started. Her reminiscences described by the novelist clearly explain how the relationship staıted and developed.

> "Eight months ago she and he came and sat in the same corner. When that day came to her memory, her mind was very much moved by that thought. On that day-on the eve of the previous day when Vaceekaram was selecting the silk sarees in a cloth-shop Anavar entered into it. When she saw him she just moved to a corner as if she was touched by her modesty and was seeing the saree with her head bent down ...Anavar paid the money for the cost of the saree, received the saree and turned his head towards vaceekaram saying 'come on let us go'...... Even though this was not the first experience in her life it was the first day of her relationship with him and so there was more heart-beats in her; frequently there was swcat in her face ..... When she thought that she was sitting in the same corner her old thoughts rushed to her mind...... All these things came to her memory. She thought that her heart-beats were more in those days. But, today she has taken coffee and is chewing the *pan-supari* lying herself in a slanting position in the broad moon light."[22]

The above excerpts form the summary of antecedent events by the omniscıent author. As the author expressed the thoughts that arose in the mind of Vaceekaram in his own

language, we call the expression of the author a sort of 'flash-back' in the form of monologue.

Let us now turn our attention to the plain flash back technique. The best example of this can be seen in *Karit-tuntu* i.e., the portion of the story narrated by artist Mokan when he recalls in jail his early life. Here artist Mokan does not think of his early life as Vaceekaram thought of her life, but he expresses his earlier life in his own words. Therefore we call this experience of Mokan as the plain flash back technique. Let us now see an example.

> "There is no mistake in revealing this to you. You have moved with me rather too closely; I tell you...... Nirmala is not an unknown person. She is my wife. The art reared our life. Beauty was the main reason for our mutual attraction. No doubt we lived a happy life. But it was only for merely a span of two days. Within that time we felt aversion and boredom ..... I was not elear in my mind as I am now. I did not have the same boldness which I have now At that time I lived for the sake of art. I tried to make use of Nirmala for that. She lived for the sake of esteem of the people of the world......"[23]

Another instance can be cited from *Man-kuticai*. The first 195 pages of this novel seem to read like a travelogue for the readers. Because Meyyappan does not start narrating the story at the very beginning. After describing all the places which he has travelled in 195 pages he begins to narrate the story thus on page 196. "I began to describe first the event that took place on the evening of a particular day,"[24] says he and the description ends as follows : "My period of im-prisonment was over. But the punishment of this family is not over. It still continues."[25]

4. Foreshadowing

Another device generally employed by the novelist is 'foreshadowing'. Here the outcome of the conflict is antici-

pated by such means as the speeches of the characters, by brief, small-scale representations of the final relationships, or by symbols which hint at the outcome. The effect of foreshadowing may be to arouse the curiosity and heighten the suspense, or, if it is so obvious that the reader recognizes its significance it may enable him to take an ironic view of the action. An instance of this technique can be found in *Nencil-Oru-Mul*. The author forecasts even through her dream that the love of Vativu for Palaraman will be an utter failure.

> "Palaraman and I were sitting on the branch of a tree which was leaning towards a tank. We were sitting there as if we were sitting on the plank of a swing. We were sitting also there with our hands clasped together. We do not know how we went there. When we were looking at each other with riveted attention, the branch suddenly broke off and fell into the river. He was seen swimming and going towards the bank of the tank. I was struggling. That is all. Immediately that dream vanished. I woke up from the dream."[26]

In *Malar-vili* the author forecasts the pathetic end of Collector Celvanayakam through a tragic scene of *Hamlet* which Malar-vili, Annamalai and his wife witness.

5. Interior Monologue

"Interior monologue is" according to Melvin Friedman "a direct quotation from the mind in the process of creating either thoughts or impressions and is carried on completely in the active state."[27] Every novelist employs this technique in the twentieth century consciously or unwittingly in his writings. Critics of literature think that this technique is one of the best techniques employed by the novelists for successfully creating the illusion of life. This technique by which all the ideas hidden in the sub-conscious mind are exposed belongs to a branch of psychology. Mu. Va has employed this technique to bring out the inner feelings of the so-called 'persons of thoughts' like Alli and Vativu. For exmample in *Nencil-Oru Mul* the author describes the inner conflict of Vativu as follows :

"As usual I lay in the bed that day after lunch But I did not have any sleep. I was rolling in the bed thinking of something. Suddenly the thought of Vijaya Ammaiyar came into my mind. If that lady had lived now she might have had the privilege of having the pleasure of being surrounded by grand-children. But she became the target of anxiety about her material prosperity, turned into broken-hearted woman and died at the end. Even though during her life time the later part of her life was like a day enveloped by clouds like my life time, she was fortunate enough to share the love and affection of her two daughters. Will there not be any change in the affection of a daughter? If so what was the defect of my love and affection......Last month in the same hall my father and myself whiled away time by sitting for hours together.. ...I move with my mother as if I am a small child. But I cannot move so with my father. Suppose I have a female child? If Kannalakan was born as a girl ! I might have had lot of consolation. I spent my time by pondering like this." [28]

The above passage forms part and parcel of Vativu's musings.

6. Intrusion of the Author

Generally, novelists should allow their characters to speak out and think aloud in the story and they are not supposed to intrude. Even if they want to narrate certain things they have to abide by certain restrictions and limitations. If they transgress those limits the aesthetic sense is affected. All the efforts taken by the novelists to create an illusion of life will be shattered by this intrusion. There is only one place in the whole of Mu. Va novels where this transgression is noticed.

"The people went near the *Civalinkam* and worshipped it with sincere devotion. The sight of people, who came for worship after their bath was very pleasing. An ascetic even without loincloth, his whole body being smeared with sacred ashes also came there

for worship. (Such people should realize that there will be no use of seeking popularity by such an appearance which will be despicable.")[29]

The above passage forms a part of Meyappan's narration. But the author intrudes in his narration. This intrusion has been shown in brackets.

In conclusion, we may state that Mu. Va has employed many techniques in his novels just as many other novelists have done in their works. But as far as I know there are no Tamil novelists who have introduced many points of view so widely and adroitly as Mu. Va has done in his novels. This is a unique feature that we find in his novels. This may be that Mu. Va is more of a thinker than a writer. Dr. Thani Nayagam's view also lends support to my opinion. "Varadaracan is the objective research worker, thinker and scholar who has turned novelist in contrast with writers of fiction of Tamil Nadu who have turned research workers"[30] says the learned scholar. Mu. Va is successful in his creative art because he had studied the history and development of fiction, the varions forms of fiction and the different forms of techniques before he emerged as a novelist. One has to study his critical treatise entitled '*Ilakkiya Marapu*' to understand him and estimate his success in the proper perspective.

NOTES :

1. *The Craft of Fiction.* Section XVIII, p. 268.
2. *Kayamai*, p. 47.
3. *Novelists on the Novel*, p. 191.
4. *Nencil Oru Mul*, pp 358–359.
5. *Critical Approaches to Fiction*, ('Point of view in the Novel' an essay written by John E. Tilford Jr.), p. 308.
6. *Alli*, pp 127-146.
7. ibid, pp. 256–261.
8. ibid, pp. 76–80.
9. ibid, pp. 330–331.
10. *Kallo? Kaviyamo?* p. 156.
11. *Student's Guide to Literature*, p 105.
12. *Kallo? Kaviyamo?* pp. 159, 163 and 164.
13. ibid, p. 136.
14. *Antanal*, 102.
15. *Virginia Woolf: Her Art as a Novelist*, p. 91.
16. *Critical Approaches to Ftction*, p. 310. (Point of View article written by John E. Tilford, Jr.)
17. *Akal-vilakku*, p. 69.
18. ibid, p. 216.
19. ibid, pp. 13–14.
20. *Man-kuticai*, p. 502.
21. Lee. T. Lomon : *A Glossary for the Study of English*, p. 43.
22. *Kayamai* pp. 81–83 and 86.
23. *Karit-tuntu* pp. 194–207.
24. *Man-kuticai*, p. 196.
25. ibid, p. 204.
26. *Nencil Oru Mul*, pp. 24–25.
27. *Stream of consciousness: A Study in literary Method*, p. 7.
28. *Nencil Oru Mul*, pp. 431–432.
29. *Man-kuticai*, p. 99.
30. *'The Novelist of the City of Madras'*, *Tamil Culture*, Vol. X, No. 2, p. 8.

CHAPTER X

A BRIEF STUDY OF HIS SHORT STORIES

Even though Dr. M Varadarajan is credited with as many as seventeen short stories, his popularity is not based on these as he established greater reputation as a novelist. Perhaps, the reason is that being a great thinker at the first instance he had determined to communicate all his thoughts to the masses and the short story did not serve this purpose as the author had to conform to the short canvas of this literary form by way of developing his theme. Though his freedom has been affected by the restriction imposed by this *genre*, he has devoted some attention to this. The two collections entitled *Vitutalaiya?* (1948) and *Kurattai Oli* (1956) have no doubt earned a prominent place in the history and the development of short stories in Tamil. The former contains six stories and the latter eleven. Besides these seventeen stories Mu. Va might have written some others also but they are not available in print.

There are many types of short stories. Certain short stories become popular on account of the characters who figure in them and the popularity of certain others is to be attributed to the writer's skill in matters of plot construction while some others earn their popularity by virtue of their philosophical content. Prof. Walton Patrick classifies the short stories as follows: " One writer may choose in a particular story to emphasise the character and to minimise theme or plot. Another writer may prefer habitually to give stronger emphasis to plot than to character..... A story stressing theme or idea can lie close to an essay in purpose." [1] Another critic Carl H. Grabo classified them in the following way. " Stories classified fall into four groups: "Stories of action, character, setting, idea and emotional effect It will be possible, I think, to show that all stories fall into one or another of these divisions." [2]

1. Types of Stories

The short stories of Mu. Va fall into four groups. (1) Stories based on characters (2) Stories based on social consciousness. (3) Stories based on the fundamental truths of life and (4) Stories based on auto-biographical elements. One can conclude that Mu. Va has written these stories as he enriched himself with some experience in his day-to-day life. These stories are marked by the depiction of the rural atmosphere in which he was born, the life of the people in the different strata of society, the urban atmosphere in which he was placed when he moved to Madras to serve in a college, the various kinds of struggles that people undergo to get on with their busy life, and the continuous mental changes of the people on account of these struggles. He has remained true to facts as far as possible in these stories.

(i) Stories based on the characters :

Among the seventeen short stories the two stories entitled *Antamanam varuma?* and *Amavacaiyar* have earned a permanent place in the minds of the readers. These two are based on the special characteristics of two individual persons. Each story shines in its own way in a particular angle. The characters in these stories have been selected from the rural folks placed in the rural atmosphere. As we read the stories we feel as if we have come across such persons somewhere in our life. Even now such men are seen in the villages. Some characters in Mu. Va's stories attract us as Wessex people portrayed by Thomas Hardy in his novels do. Just as the chorus group in Hardy's novels symbolise the philosophy of life so also the rustics in Mu. Va's stories represent the life of people in the Indian villages. One can also perceive a special type of mental outlook in these persons.

The story *Antamanam Varuma?* is about a respectable village dignitary who is known for his liberality of outlook to some extent. This person has not read any philosophical or religious texts and he has been neither a thinker nor a good speaker on ethics. On the other hand he is an ordinary person,

who knows how to respect the other man and who loves his neighbour as he loves himself. He is a man who considers that it is a great sin if one saves more than what is necessary for him. But he sticks to his convictions and does not believe in sermonising them. Mu. Va compares this man to a high mountain situated near his village. He also compares him with a tall coconut tree found in the midst of the village:

> "There was some kind of unity between that family and the mountain. Simplicity coupled with grandeur; poverty alongside of philanthrophy; old age without tiresomeness; I perceived these noble qualities both in this great man as well as in the mountain."[3]

These are the words of the author by way of comparison of the great man and the mountain. This comparison develops into a short story slowly and the life of the person and his benevolent deeds unfold themselves. The author has also devoted his special attention to the point of view of the story. He has designed the story in such a way that the narrator of the story is one who is detached from it. Similarly, the story *Amavacaiyar* is about the life of an ordinary village folk. It is based on the fine sentiment of a harmless person who spends his time by simply talking about the stories of others. The author introduces him in his inimitable style coloured with his subtle humour maintaining a sort of dignity and grandeour in his narration.

> "Tall appearance; well built body; a stomach symbolising austerity to the other extreme; a sharp and piercing look in his eyes which have recovered from the cataract though not be spectacled. Shrinking cheeks; teeth still shining without showing the symptom of decay; sacred ashes smeared in his broad fore-head; in between the stripes of the ashes a prominent saffron dot; not bald-headed; a small tuft waving in the wind; a dhoti and an upper garment red in colour but faded because of constant washing by himself."[4]

This is the description of the villager Amavacaiyar. Generally he is good in nature. He does not enter into any sort of

controversy nor involve himself directly in any intriguing affair. By simply sitting on a pial of his house he gives an account of all the people in his village. The news of whatever incident takes place in any family somehow or other reaches him. Somehow he catches hold of all those passing through the streets and elicits information from them. Similarly those passers-by gather something spicy from this man. His pial can be considered as a bureau of information regarding that small village. He plays the role of dailies, weeklies and even monthlies. All the passers-by in the street are his reporters. His very mouth serves as the department of information and broadcasting for that village.[5]

When the author brings out the peculiar characteristics of the villager one can see the element of subtle humour of the author interspersing his narration. Besides these characters there are other characters who are unforgettable.

(ii) Stories based on social consciousness:

The basis for all Mu. Va's creations can in general be said to be his social consciousness. But this element dominates in certain stories like *Tenkait-tuntukal* (Coconut Chips), *Etaiyo Peciar*, (Some thing he spoke) *Yaro teriyatu* (It is not known who he is), *Ellorum camam*, (All are equal), *Valum Vali* (The Way to Live), *Kattayam Ventum* (It is a Must), *Vaytirak-kamatten* (I cannot open my mouth), *Kurattai Oli* (The Snoring Sound). The events in the stories and the qualities of the characters in them reveal many thoughts about the society. The author's views on the society can be found in the following excerpt from the story *Etaiyo Pecinar*.

> "A saint is one who realizes that all the beings and things in the world are 'my evolution'. The atheist is one who considers himself as the only pure man and throws all the blames on others. The theist is one who puts all the blames of others on himself and takes the responsibility of reforming them. A wiseman is one who learns to think that money-hunt is the only root cause for all the prevailing states of affairs that are

marred by destitution, the absence of love and intelligence, and want of responsibility. It may take a long time to make the society affluent in all possible ways. On the other hand, it does not require much time for a person to think on these lines. Every one should think for himself that it is his duty to establish a society free from the desire to amass wealth. A philosopher is one who thinks on these lines whenever he happens to see the prevailing atrocities in the land."[6]

No doubt one can see the author's social consciousness provoking these thoughts in him. In the story *Ellorum Camam* (All are Equal) the author points out a peculiar mentality prevailing among the people. He points out that there are persons who sympathise only with those who have dwindled from their states of affluence. Apart from being incapable of showing any iota of sympathy, these persons profess an aversion for those who remain poor for many generations as they feel that it is their fate or the ordinance of God to remain in a state of poverty for ever. The story *Yaroteriyatu* (It is not known who he is) is again, more or less a story that depicts the disposition of the people in general. In this story the author portrays the psychological progression in the people's heart, just as one describes the events of a train journey. The common tendency of dominating the next man when he is found weak and becoming humble when he seems to be stronger is described through the travals of an unknown train passenger. In the story *Valum Vali* he brings out a universal truth by means of a small incident. Here he drives home the point that helping the have-nots is the only kind of religious service. In *Vaytirakkamatten* (I cannot open my Mouth) he has pointed out the atrocities committed by those who have amassed huge wealth by black-market and he portrays another section of society with undergoes untold suffering for having opposed and exposed the evil ways of the moneyed section. Through the story *Kattayam Ventum* (It is a Must) Mu. Va explicates the tragic reality of how the tyranny of poverty does not spare even the young kids who are the germs of the future society. He reaches this generalisation through the presentation of pathetic death of a young urchin. The story *Tenkait-tuntukal*

(Coconut Chips) has a two-fold significance. This story has at its nucleus three friends — a pick-pocketer, a righteous man and an innocent person — who come to Madras to eke out their livelihood. On the one hand the author is successful in presenting the different psychological states of the three individuals and on the other he is also successful in portraying the subtilities of the city life.

Of the seventeen short stories *Kurattai Oli* seems to be the best one, a story which should be immediately translated in all the world languages according to an young critic Tiru M. Ramalingam.[7] The author reveals himself as a fine artist by the creation of this story. In *Kurattai Oli* the author shows us two families — a poor family blessed with many children living in a small humble hut and a rich family not blessed with children living in a storied building nearby. In this portrayal the author brings out a difference and likens it with the difference found between a mountain and a small pool nearby. Even here one can see that the author's exquisite and special skill in the portrayal of the poverty-stricken family with many children is better than the portrayal of the affluent family. He has not only portrayed the outward conditions of that poor family but also the affectionate nature of the poor mother and the innermost recesses of her motherly heart. The poor mother does not resent the fervent cry of the puppies for the last three days on account of their acute hunger in the veranda of her house. On the other hand she is prompted by her motherly feeling to respond to their tender feelings. The following excerpt may well bring out that noble quality.

> "She carried a coconut shell in her left hand. There was a milk-like liquid in the shell. She had something like a sponge in her right hand. She just dipped the sponge in the milk-like thing and placed it in the mouth of the puppies. The puppies tasted that sponge and stopped their crying. Within a short time three fourth of their cry subsided. Only one puppy was crying. She placed the coconut shell on the ground. Then she brought the sponge-like thing near the nipple of her

breast at the same time pressing the breast with her left hand. By so wetting the sponge with her breast milk she placed it in the mouth of the puppy. She performed it thrice and the cry of this puppy also completely subsidied."[8]

Here the author not only shows the motherly feeling of a woman but also indirectly indicates by suggestion that the condition of the children living in the huts in the rural parts is akin to the condition of the puppies just now referred to.

(iii) The Creator in his creation :

There are certain short stories of Mu. Va which reveal certain biographical incidents of the author. In other words one can see the creator in his creation. The story *Vitutalaiya?* (Is it Freedom?) is of a peculiar nature. While the other stories are the products of his experience and Imagination this story is the off shoot of his own life. In this one can see certain incidents of his early life, his experience in scholastic career, an account of how he was brought up by his grandmother and something of his native village Velam where he was born and brought up In this story imaginative element is found less while the real incidents are portrayed more.

"The family in which Tiruvenkatam was brought up is different The time in which he lived was also different. He was the only male representative of the three families His uncle (elder-brother of his father) had lost his son. Therefore there was no other male issue in the family. Tiruvenkatam was the only male child for his parents. The children born before him of his parents are female children. The family from which his mother hailed had no male issue at all. The only female child born in that family was his mother. The mother of that child (mother) was his grand-mother who took him to the Headmaster and left him to his custody. His grand-mother was in penance that her daughter should have a son. She prayed to Tirumal who had taken his abode at Kanci, her birth place

> With the same desire she went to Tirupati on pilgrimage and there also prayed the Netiyon the Lord of the Seven Hills. There, according to the custom prevalent among those who pray for getting issues, she too lit a fire in a hearth at the holy place. The same child born by the grace of the Lord of Seven Hills was the boy wearing a cap and dhoti with laced border who was found as one among the other boys who went on a procession through the bazaar streets in connection with the celebration of School Health Day."[9]

The boy Tiruvenkatam mentioned in the story is no other than Mu. Va whose grand-mother baptised him with that name. In *Antamanam Varuma*? the author beautifully describes his native village Velam and his favourite 'Cattakkal' and 'Kurccumalai'.

(iv) *Stories based on the fundamental truth of life* :

obviously Mu. Va shows the clarity of his intellect in writings his short stories.

> "Art has two important functions to fulfil. It promotes happiness and also moulds the life in a mysterious manner."[10]

This statement of Mu. Va in a way explains his concept of art pertaining to short stories. "For a great and increasing number of people in our days the active agent in shaping their life is not religion or philosophy but imaginative literature."[11] This view of modern criticism coupled with the conviction of Mu. Va enhances the greatness of the *genre* of short story. Though Mu Va's stories have been written on different aspects of life some of his stories like *Iyarkai Pollatatu*, (The nature is Dangerous) *Ulakam Poy* (The World is Unreal), *Akkarai-p-Paccai* (The Enchanting View) and *Cutarin-nakaippu* (The Smile of Flame) may be considered as those written to emphasise the spiritual development and realisation of the ultimate reality. The last mentioned story *Cutarin-nakaippu* is a rare piece of art showing even to the ignorant that the cycle of

births and deaths has some significance. Creation, Maintenance and Destruction are the divine processes which God had ordered on His own. It may be considered His divine-play. In His creation He bestows the fragrance and colour on the flowers, He gives attractive features like tender arms and slender form to young women and similarly attractive moustache sinewy arms and strong body to young men so that there will be mutual attraction between them. The characteristic crowing of cocks and the bellowing of bulls attract the attention of hens and heifers resulting in their sexual union. A chick cannot crow nor a calf cannot bellow. They get their instinctive cries only when they attain their maturity. This is the law of nature or as we can say, the divine Ordinance. just as He aids in the process of Creation, so also He aids in the Process of Maintenance. When we think why he has given green body to the worms which live on green grass and green foliage and why He has given red beaks and green body to parrots which usually reside in green groves and eat red coloured fruits, we can realise the secret and significance of the divine law in the maintenance of the living beings. The same God who cteates also destroys. The process of decay is also the rule of the divine law. The creation of leopards and lions, cats and tigers in a way explains the significance of the law. His rule of the law does not permit any body to prolong his life after he has become incapacitated either on account of desease or due to old age. In other words, He does not like the existence of any living being which cannot save itself, which cannot in any way be useful to the community or the society of which it is a member. That is why the wild animals do not spare all the living beings who have lost their strength due to age or disease. He does not permit these living beings to die of their own accord. Only the man, perhaps on account of his will, wants to escape from the divine ordinance. It has become a necessity for God to create small micro-scopic and ultra-microscopic germs and viruses more deadly than the fierce wild animals to the disadvantage of man. As man has transgressed or made an attempt to transgress the divine law, polluted atmosphere has begun to prevail in the realm of man. Therefore, one has to realize that Creation and Destruction are in accordance with His will.

Saint Tirunavukkaracu has realized much about growth, development and death. He realized something about death only at the end of his life. This realization can be seen in his decad of Tituvaiyaru celebrating the deity of the sacred place. when he visited that place he saw in his vision a male elephant along with a female elephant and he has expressed in his jubilant and ecstatic mood that has seen His divine Feet which he has never seen in his life. God laughs at man when he has not realized the truth just as a flame smiles.

One who has not realized the fundamental truths of life namely birth, growth and death as His divine action one is supposed to be steeped in ignorance or nescience. The offshoot of nescience is weeping and unending suffering. This is the conception or rather the imperfect vision of man of imperfection. Mu. Va being a man whose aim is always the attainment of perfection makes an earnest attempt to stimulate us to have the perfect vision of God in the story *Cutarin-nakaippu*. Poet Bharathi in his poem on "Auto Biography" has stated: The world is a big dream. Man in that world eats, sleeps, creates troubles and then dies. He is a trouble-making insect in such an unreal world. His life is, therefore, a dream, an empty dream.[12] The poet who has then and there emphasised that the world is unreal like a dream, has also in some places tried to refute his own statement or idea perhaps in a mood of sympathy and disappointment. An example of such verses is the one commencing with the words "*Nirpattuve Natappatuve*"[13] wherein he seems to address immovable objects and moveable beings and asks them whether they are insignificant unreal things or they have any significance.

Sometimes these controversial ideas and contradictions begin to arise and stimulate thoughts in the minds of those who have made a deep study of Bharathi's works. Such kind of thinking has found a place in the short story entitled *Ulakam-poy*. The *Kevalavatins* cherish their conviction that the world is unreal on the basis of the 'rope-snake' analogy. They state that till *jnana* is attained, the world may seem to be real and after the attainment of that *jnana* it would be clear to them that the world is unreal But millions of people cannot

attain that *jnana*. Poet Bharathi, Mu. Va and others have been successful. As they are artists this light of *jnana* might have flashed in their minds and created a stir in them. Such a kind of stir has resulted in the genesis of this story.

Mu. Va states that all the events of the world are like the events of a play and the dream is like a cinema.[14] The dream is out and out unreal. The actors in a play are true but the events created by them are unreal. Therefore the play can be likened to a life of an unreal thing in the real setting. In other words, the 'selves' are real and their worldly life is like a drama, a sort of *lila* or a play. It is a sort of puppet show, an illusory play. The king appearing in the drama is neither a king nor a mendicant; the wife is not a real wife and a prostitute is not a real prostitute. The men and the women characters in the drama are neither real men nor real women. Sometimes men appear to be monkeys. Sometimes they appear to be man-lion. They fly like *garuda*; they lay like *catayu* the king of kites. They even grant boons as if they are celestial beings. They even appear to be wandering in the infernal regions. Be it as it may, they all come under the category of human beings. The parts played by them under different garbs are unreal. But the men who play such role are real beings. Similarly, the men and women moving in the dramatic stage of the world are real men. But the role they play is unreal. In other words, the souls are real but the seemingly apparent action of these souls is unreal. The story stands as a symbol for an explanation of the truths that 'the world is illusory and it is not *sat*' which is the *siddhanta of kevaladvaita*.

The story *Iyarkai-Pollatatu* (Nature is Dangerous) is based on Ramatirta's dictum 'pity is sin'. The only being that commits this sin is human being; other animate beings and inanimate things do not possess this instinct of pity. Man who stands apart prominently from sentient beings and non-sentient things is also distinguished by his sense of showing pity. In other words, he is against Nature and acts against the ordinance of God.

Thus, man who is acting against the will of God out of ignorance of His secret design does not stop himself with that; he even goes to the extent of finding fault with Nature. "It is dangerous" he argues It is only a human vision; a mere vision of intellect. This should be viewed through the vision of real *jnana*; it should be viewed from the vision of the Lord. This will be a vision of His grace, a vision transcending the vision of the human being. St. Tayumanavar in a verse refers to this vision of real *jnana* when he states: "He asked me to view things through the vision of His grace. But I viewed it through my own vision without understanding the real purport of His command. The cumulative result was that not only I saw darkness but also lost my 'self' ".[15]

The divine design is the greatest one; it is the broadest in space and time; it even transcends time and space. But we, frail as we are, who are "cribbed, cabined and confined" in the limits of time and space are not able to have a full vision, an all embracing vision in which the whole world can be seen. We cannot even hear about the whole vision with our limited faculty of hearing. We cannot even realize the all-embracing vision on account of our agitated and disturbed mind. That is why we always perceive defects only in the divine design.

The stone and the earth are found everywhere; herbs and shrubs are also found on the land as well as in the sea. These are superior to stone and earth in the matter of growth and development. Insects and worms are finer than grass and herbs. Still superior are birds and beasts in the matter of possessing finer organs and limbs. Among all these man has variety of finer organs and limbs; he takes variety of food. Therefore, stone and earth do deserve pardon for their errors. Similarly grass and herb deserve it for their omission and commission in a larger measure. Worms, insects, birds and beasts do not commit mistakes on their own accord. But when caught by man these two often involve themselves in mistake and so they are punished. But as man has got intelligence just equal to that of God if not more, God or Nature does not pardon him. When man's intelligence or wisdom is hidden or

blurred on account of his *karma* or wicked deeds he loses his insight and raises his voice to the effect that Nature is dangerous. 'The mind is dangerous. It always seeks after something novel. It wanders with a desire to have the hidden element in a new thing. It is mad after a thing beyond its reach ignoring the one which is readily available. The cumulative effect is worries and anxiety. There is no peace for the mind nor consolation to it.' The sum and substance of this is the basis of the story *Akkaraip-paccai* (The Enchanting View). The author explains the title by citing a person who gives up his present position and accepts a new one anticipating prosperity in future. Later he realizes that the previous one was good. In the same story Mu. Va shows a husband who abandons his first wife because of the development of the unhappiness with her, marries a second woman and finding her unsuitable, later comes back to the first wife.

2. Titles of the Stories

An appropriate and an attractive title has no little to do with the effectiveness of a story. The story and the title are so closely associated with each other that it is difficult to think in terms of a dichotomy between the two. This being so, a title is not to be selected lightly; we may say, indeed, that a good story can have but one effective and suitable title. The title has no alternative just as a synonym is never so effective as the one right word in style. But as titles are of all sorts and conditions, we must review some of them to decide upon the principles which determine an appropriate selection.

Carl H. Grabo classifies the titles as (1) The title drawn from the name of the chief character, (2) Names of place figuring in the story, (3) Names of character and place being combined. Of the two collections of short stories of Mu. Va, the collection entitled *Vitutalaiya?* containing six stories catches our attention. In this collection he points out six different problems in the six stories and narrates the effects and impacts of those problems at the end and thus ends the story. After reading these stories the reader becomes preoccu-

pied with the problem effectively brought out by the author and he asks himself Vitutalaiya? For example in the first story of the collection Tiruvenkatam's grand-mother goes mad and suffers from various kinds of troubles. Tiruvenkatam grieves very much at the sight of his grand-mother who brought him up with affection, suffering from those troubles. His sound sleep, one day, gives a temporary relief from that grief, he feels as if he was freed from that grief. Further Mu. Va employs the word '*Vitulaiya?*' in a finer sense. In certain places it attains an air of satire. In the story *Kattayam Ventum* a poor urchin is seen to have committed suicide by plunging into the sea as he was unable to appease his unbearable hunger and the author poses a question to us 'Is it freedom?' In the story *Etaiyo Pecinar* a poor mother is seen committing suicide as she was unable to face poverty and it looks as if the author asks us 'Is it freedom'?

The very title *Kurattai Oli* (The Snoring Sound) given to the other collection containing eleven short stories is also significant and meaningful. There is also a story under this title included in this collection. The symbolic element in this story is thought-provoking. The mentality of the people in the higher strata of society to refuse even to see the painful condition of the people of the lower strata is symbolised as "*Kurattai Oli*" – 'The Snoring Sound'.

Even though the popularity of Mu. Va has not based upon the short stories, as pointed out in the introductory portion of this chapter, they are in no way inferior to the great novels that won an indisputable position for him in the world of Tamil literature. It is only by comparison that they are given a secondary place whenever one approaches the fiction of Mu. Va.

Mu. Va, as we have seen through his fiction, is a conscious artist and his stories have multi-dimensional existence. Some are known for their character-orientation. Some others deal with the social commitment which Mu. Va likes to evoke in his stories. Yet a few have an autobiographical tinge and some other touch the fundamental and basic truth of human

existence. All the stories thus reveal the versatality of Mu. Va in writing short stories. The titles are also appropriate keeping in view the multi-faceted nature of the stories or the anthologies.

NOTES :

1. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1955), Vol. 20, p. 580.
2. *The Art of the Short Story*, p. 198.
3. *Kurattai Oli*, p. 13.
4 ıbid, p. 37.
5. ibid, p. 37.
6. *Vitutalaiva ?* pp. 79-80.
7. *Punaikatai-valam*. p. 64.
8. *Kurattai Oli*, p. 85.
9. *Vitutalaiva ?* pp. 15-16.
10. *Vitutalaiva ?* Preface.
11. *The Modern Novel*, p. 21.
12. *Cuvacaritai* verse 3.
13. *Vetantap-patalkal*, 12.
14. *Kurattai Oli*, p. 74.
15. *Tayumanavar* verse :

CHAPTER X

THE AUTHOR'S PHILOSOPHY

There have always been novelists who were not satisfied to leave their works a dramatic picture of human nature, but have felt impelled to make it the obvious vehicles of their general philosophy of life The eighteenth century was particularly rich in philosophic novels in the western countries. The novels of Goethe, Rousseau can be cited as examples. These novels in their origins were not well differentiated from philosophy nor constituted a literary farm in their own right. Writers like Victor Hugo and W.G Wells who have taken the novel as it came to them from the hands of Scott and Richardson, Dickens and Eliot, made it bear a greater weight of reflective wisdom than even those serious writers. These 'philosophic novelists' as stated by Joseph Warren Beach are often extremely able story-tellers. But it is evident that it is not to the story that they attach much importance, but to social, economic and political implications which are to be derived from it. Generally speaking, these novelists in spite of their often extraordinary talents and qualities of mind do not occupy a very high place in the estimation of the literary critics although they may be very closely read and are likely to be better known. Mu. Va is not an except onal writer in our own time in the light of the above consideration. He is widely read more in our own country especially in Tamil Nadu and also abroad like Ceylon and Malaysia, for the philosophical content of his fiction.

Therefore it remains for us in this thesis to deal with the author's criticism, interpretation or philosophy of life. As we know, the novel is concerned directly with life, that is, with men and women, and their relationships, their thoughts and feelings and the passions and motives by which they are governed and impelled, their joys and sorrows, their struggles, successes and failures. Since the novelist's theme is life in one or several of its innumarable aspects, it is impossible for him

to keep himself away from these aspects when he writes his novels. He will witting by or unwitingly, expressly or by implication, throw some suggestion at least of the impression which life makes upon him. He may not set out with a preconceived notion of using his narratives as a medium for communicating his pet theories or ideas, but they will nonetheless be found embodied in them. Even the slightest story will certainly contain a distinct conception of the moral values of the characters and incidents of which it is composed. We may therefore say to this extent at least that every novel, no matter how trivial it is, rests upon a certain view of the world to connote various general principles and thus to present a rough general philosophy of life.

It may appear manifestly absurd if we talk about a philosophy of life in connection with the ordinary run of the ephemeral works of fiction which have no depth of interest and are written with no purpose beyond that of providing amusement for the idle hour. Even if we chance to read some kind of philosophy into these novels of ephemeral value, it may not be worthy of serious consideration. This is not true in the case of outstanding novelists who have been great thinkers as well as keen observers of life. Their knowledge of character, their insight into motive and passion, their illuminative treatment of the enduring facts and problems of experience, to say nothing of the ripe wisdom which they often bring to bear upon their task, combine to embellish their view of the world with a moral significance which no thoughtful reader is likely to overlook. How important this philosophical element in their work really is, is strikingly shown by the fact that in discussing any great novel we soon find ourselves involved in the discussion of life itself.

It is not to be understood by what has been stated above that we are to think of a novelists as expounding a set body of ethical doctrines or as contriving his story as an embodiment of certain ideas about life. This would be to misconceive grossly the attitude and method of the true creative artist. In the light of the above statement, I have tried to point out the 'philosophy of life' of Mu. Va is a creative artist in the real

sense of the term. What he thinks about life inevitably guides him, consciously or unconsciously, in the arrangement of his plot and the treatment of his characters. His primary concern is not with abstract questions but with the concrete facts of life which he handles without any effort or desire to suggest their moral meanings. In this connection I would like to point out the statement of C.S. Lewis which occurs in his preface to *Paradise Lost Book IX and X*. "Milton's thought", says he, "when purged of its theology, does not exist."[1] Similarly if all the ideas of Mu. Va are divorced from his works, they cannot be considered as real pieces of art. In other words his ideas do give life and spirit and even beauty to his fiction. Therefore, in my opinion, the critical study of his fiction, will not be complete if I do not consider his thoughts, ideas and ideals. In this chapter, I set myself to examine them under several heads as religion, society, sex, love, marriage, education and art and life. It may not be out of place for me to put forth the difficulties in assessing the novelist's philosophy of life. A novelist can deliver his message in three ways. Firstly, he can deliver it through the characters he has created making a few of them as his mouth piece; he can communicate his message rather implicitly through the delineation of certain characters in the novel. Secondly, he can make use of his theme as a means of expressing his message. Thirdly, he can deliver it through an unknown voice of an unidentifiable person. Among these three methods the first method is the potent one which can be easily handled by a novelist. But even here there is some difficulty. It is not easy to identify the author with every character he portrays. One cannot take it for granted that all the ideas spoken by all the characters can be attributed to the author's philosophy. Sometimes a character can be made to express on the same subject two contradictory views, or the statement of a particular character may appear to smack of the views of the author. But if one probes further one can notice that the view-point is different from that of the author. Therefore, the critic has to catalogue with meticulous care all the views expressed in a novel through different characters, compare them with the views mentioned in the other works of the novelist, sift them properly and then come to a conclusion

in identifying the views of the author. This may be difficult for the critic but it is not impossible. Sometimes a particular view might have been emphasised in his different novels or in his other works. These views can be taken to be those of the author's. In this thesis I have tried my best to bring out the author's philosophy or the message that is found in his different works.

1. Religion

Those who do not have an inkling into the religious faith of Mu. Va merely dub him as an agnostic or an atheist. Such a conclusion can be attributed to the fact that he does not wear any sacred mark on his forehead to indicate his faith and he does not attach any importance to this kind of demonstration of one's faith. The various ways of showing one's devotion to God according to him are doing service without any motive, living with social consciousness, moving with people with a pure mind and on ethical principles. He considers anyone who is devoid of these qualities but who exhibits his faith through these externals as an atheist. "It is not sufficient", says he, "to believe the existence of God blindly. One should conduct oneself according to the will of God. Those who fail to do so are atheists".[2] According to him God is one who is beyond attachment. One should live according to the will of God. In one context he reveals this conviction. "The majority of people are of the view that devotion to God is sufficient. No doubt, devotion is necessary. But devotion with selfish motive should be eschewed. People should be made to understand that devotion pure and simple will be of no use if they do not consider society as God's family and if they do not live without doing any help to others. If the so-called theist fails to do these things atheists will rise in society and shake its very foundation."[3] If one comes across complications in life one should contemplate, according to him, how God will view those complications. He has developed a sort of hatred for caste distinctions and external paraphernalia as he had witnessed on many occasions that some knaves had achieved their desires and ends without any difficulty by making use of temples and their priests as their

tools. Mu. Va's righteous indignation in this regard can be noticed in his novels. Mu. Va being a man of devotion who has recited the hymns of Tiruvacakam and Tayumanavar with utmost faith has clearly stated that all the ideas cantained in those hymns are not to be followed in blind faith. In one of his letters to a student he reveals his views as follows: "I have toiled too much. I need rest. I have the privilege of availing myself of the leave to take rest. Even that rest is not for idling away time; it is meant for communion with God.[4]" Many such incidents as these, proclaim loudly that Mu. Va is out and out a theist.

Mu. Va evaluates God only as the mightiest power. According to him God has no form. He is an Almighty who bestows His grace on all, the good and the wicked, the worshippers and non-worshippers, impartially. In one context he says:

> "God is only a great power. How can He grant the requirements of all individually ... Electricity is an ordinary power; a small power. It behaves in an orderly mannei with set principles. Will it be useful only to those who praise it? .. It gives the same light to those who worship it and to those who do not worship it equally. God's grace also works in a similar manner. There is absolute truth in what Ramalinka Samikal has sung by way of extolling God as the embodiment of knowledge who bestows knowledge both on those who respect him and on those who do not respect him. Similarly God's ordinance will be uniform and regular. That ordinance can be called as Moral Law. It is sufficient if one follows that Moral Law according to the dictates of one's conscience. Then only our prayer to God will be strengthened."[5]

Mu. Va does not believe in rituals and ceremonials. We see him condemning these rituals and ceremonials in many contexts.[6] As Aldous Huxley has stated such rites and ceremonials will survive and develop for just so long as the emotional

concern is felt. The idea that ritual will create religious emotion, is as fantastic as trying to put the cart before the horse.[7]

Mu. Va strongly advises people not to praise the so-called divine incidents said to have taken place in the life of religious leaders. When we refer to them we should only refer to their social service and the sacrifice they have made for the betterment of society. Perhaps it is his conviction that religious truths cannot find an explanation only by the divine incidents as the scientific truths are not popularised by the stories. In this connection we are reminded of the statement of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan who says : "So long as any religious system is capable of responding creatively to every fresh challenge, whether it comes by the way of outer events or of ideas, it is healthy and progressive. When it fails to do so it is on the decline. The break-down of a society is generally due to a failure to devise adequate responses to new challenges, to a failure to retain the voluntary allegiance of the common people who, exposed to new winds of thought and criticism, are destitute of faith, though afraid of scepticism. Unless religions reckon with the forces at work and deal with them creatively they are likely to fade away."[8]

Mu. Va advises that even in rendering public or social service one should have second thought. According to him one should render service only for mental satisfaction and not with the selfish aim of enjoying some reward in the next world. When one's mind centres round the family it hovers round the feelings of '*I*' and '*Mine*'. Therefore, service is to be done in a selfless way which leads one to forget those feelings.

There is no authentic statment in any of Mu. Va's works that he has a faith in the philosophy of *Moksa*. It is not known whether he has accepted the idea of changing one's religious faith and following the principles of any new faith simply for the sake of attaining *Moksa*. In one context his philosophy is explicity clear.

Following are the words of Tiru. Vika : "The primary duty of men is to think about the welfare of his fellow-beings... Saint Tayumanavar followed this ideal as the only goal of this life. The attainment of *Moksa* by individual was the aim of the religious life for a long time. That was the only reason for the down fall of the nation Ramalinkasamigal belittled that blind faith. The ideal of any religion is to render service to his fellowmen and wipe-out their sorrows and difficulties...One need not worry oneself for the attainment of *Moksa.* One can metamosphose this world into a better world. Therefore, rendering without the feelings of '*I*' and '*Mine*' is the only best religious path in the world[9]."

According to Mu. Va the state of *mukti* is that in which one should detach oneself from the ties of the world The path of *mukti* is beautifully and vividly explained by him throngh Tanappan in *Vata-malar*.

Tanappan says to Kulantaivel : "The baby is like a pure rain water – a water unadulterated by the taint and dirt of the world. You and I as grown-ups have changed ourselves as water fallen into saltish and clayey soil. Some spoil themselves like water drops fallen into the gutter. Incompatible environments, habits and customs, faiths and coremonies spoil even the good minds ... Even if rain water falls on the gutter it will again transform itself into water vapour by the heat of the sun ... Transformation into water vapour is called *mukti*".[10]

In short, Mu. Va is said to have imbibed '*camaraca canmarka neri*'. He is not a person who follows religion in a ceremonial way. He is one who believes that a true religion should develop on the foundation of social service which only plases God. He does not like a religion which preaches means for individual salvation. He supports the philosophy of Tayunanavar, Ramalinkaswamikal, Vivekanantar and Gandhiji who always stood for the uplift of the society.

2. Society

"The novel of the future is to be the social mediator, the vehicle of understanding, the instrument of self-examination, the parade of morals, and the exchange of manners, the factory of customs, the criticism of laws and institutions and of social dogmas and ideas".[11] This reflection of H.G. Wells is thoroughly applicable to Mu. Va's novels. Mu. Va considers that there is something defective in the present day society. Mu. Va who finds out the reason for all the evils prevailing in the society, does not point out certain wicked people in it and make them scape-goats for all of them. Instead he points out many defects and loop-holes in the very structure of the present day society. In *Paliyum Pavamum* which can be termed socio-economic commentary, he has pointed out the various disorderly situations in the present day society, in the educational system in the Government offices, in the economic policies and in the political systems. He has also made it clear how the rural folks have been affected in many ways on account of the drinking habits. In fact, one is led to think that Mu. Va has designed this work in such a manner as to expose the various defects of the present day society. These defects have also been mentioned in his other novels.

> "Who is to blame if one is to become a slave to a bad environment for want of good atmosphere? This is not the fault of a few but it is the fault arising out of a defective political system. It is not the fault of a person involved in suffering but it is the fault of the world only."[12]

This statement of Ilanko in *Centamarai* explains in a way the defect of the social structure. The idea found in this statement receives a greater emphasis in his statement made in the *Ulakap-peretu*

> "There is no use of throwing blame on others by adducing apt reasons. One may think of an easy solution by pointing out certain persons for all the atrocities that are prevailing in the world. But the real reformers

> take a genuine intcrest in making a better change of the world by blaming a particular thought or thoughts."[13]

Mu. Va cites two basic reasons for all the social evils such as theft and robbery, lying, prostitution. cheating and bribery. The first one is the economic struggle of the day. As Aldous Huxley has observed : "We are on the horns of a dilemma. In every country large numbers of people are suffering privations owing to defects in the economic machine."[14] The second is the anxieties and worries about the future. In the present day society money wields a greater power. The desire to amass wealth by hook or by crook is growing more and more. Man is being crushed or sandwiched between two opposing forces namely the present economic troubles and the anxiety about the future. So, the struggle for existence is always uppermost in his mind. So, it is but natural that his inclination is always towards amassing wealth without any consideration of the means he adopts.

> "I have no faith in the means. This is a corrupt world. Nobody respects straightforward path. Those who are bold enough to live in utter poverty only can be firm without swerving from the right path."[15]

This statement of Tanappan in *Vata-malar* gives more or less a correct picture of the present day society. So, the man in such a society forgets to earn money by justfiable means; but plunges himself in the money-hunt. The situation takes a bad turn and ends in a crisis as is mentioned by Mu Va in his *Aramum-araciyalum* wherein he says :

> "The so called fire-in the present context money-which was expected to lend a helping hand in defending justice now has begun to devour the life itself by emitting dangerous embers. It annihilates the very inclination towards justice."[16]

Mu. Va does not stop with merely portraying a bad picture of the society and accounting for such a state of affairs. A doctor by careful examination of the patient first

diagnoses the nature of the disease, finds out its cause. selects the proper remedy for that and then prescribes the appropriate treatment.[17] Following this advice of Tiruvalluvar, Mu. Va suggests certain remedies for social diseases by way of treatment. He suggests an ideal world or a 'One World State' where everybody lives as if he is living in a family by sharing the pleasures and pains and troubles and tribulations He shows such a new world in his work *Ki Pi 2000*. In that new world he visualises a beautiful palace with all its amenities to live in; there one can see certain great men who volunteer to provide good food, decent dress and a life of comfort for the inmates of that palace. There tokens in respect of food, dress, abode. entertainment are issued to all without any discrimination People lead there a sort of simple life by pooling their resources in common and equally sharing them in consonance with their hard work. Similar palaces are situated in different parts of the world. A peculiar feature found in that new system is a new organisation called 'World Assembly' which is constituted by members elected at the rate of two members per hundred thousand people. There are representations from women also. Thus Mu. Va shows by his creation of a new world how to remedy the social evils of the present day society!

Mu. Va does not show any feverish haste in reforming the society within a short time.

> "One cannot experience any sort of discontentment if one has a got a frame of mind to serve the society in peace according to one's capacity with the determination to make the greatness of justice, respect to straightforward conduct and the strength of conscience to prevail every where in the society."[18]

This is the unshakable conviction which Mu. Va shows in order to make the new world function successfully. He emphasises the importance of the role of every one in the rehabilitation of society. He states that the principle of justice should be adopted by every one in a way for the betterment of society and those who expect any rewards in the shape of money or fame are only subjected to cares and anxieties which entail

such expectations. He adds that everyone should do his duties without expecting any benefits for the welfare of the future. He has explained this idea rather clearly in his novel *Man-kuticai*.

> "We will contribute our own mite in changing the order of the society...We may sow good seeds wherever possible. If we cannot do this we may at least make the land well-cultivated in a way to receive the seeds in good condition. That is our duty; realization of one's duty and acting according to it leads to successful and good life."[19]

3. Sex

Books on sex, and those that deal with sex-drives and human physiology are a rare commodity in Tamil. Even a few books that are supposed to exist by way of an apology for books of educative value on this subject, do not deal with the subject directly and scientifically. The so called books on sex available in the market are those which bear such attractive titles as 'the secrets of sex', 'the scientific ways of enjoying sex', 'the secrets of love-affairs', and are pornographic in nature. These books exert a beneful influence on the minds of the adolescents. In this connection we are reminded of the statement of G.B. Shaw who says: "Instruction in sex is as important as instruction in food... Yet not only are our adolescents not taught the physiology of sex, but never warned that the strongest sexual attraction may exist between persons so incompatible in tastes and capacities that they could not endure living together for a week much less a life-time and therefore should not marry one another even though their off-spring, which is what Nature aims at, might eugenically first rate and their sexual union therefore highly from the public point of view".[20] The frequent statements regarding sex by the author whenever occasion arises to advise youngmen lead us to think that Mu. Va has read Bernard Shaw's book cited above. That is why his writings have been interspersed with problems of sex in the case of married men and the evil consequences when the sex-drives are wrongly directed. The one

novel which deals with the various problems of sex is his *Alli*. The two diaries one by Comu and another by Dr. Alli figuring in the novel reveal many frank statements regarding the problems of sex; the former exposes all the complications of sexual problems in the case of unmartied men and the latter exposes the problems of sex involving mutual adjustment in married people. The beautiful way in which Mu. Va describes the physical contact between the people in both the cases has to be read and enjoyed in the original. A free translation of the relevant portion is given below :

> "The physical contact between husband and wife is like drinking butter-milk. It will take place in measured doses. Undue attraction in it is not there. Even the evil consequences are within the limits of protection. But an illicit enjoyment with a woman is like drinking toddy. It will never take place in measured doses. It will always have unlimited attraction. It will always be attendant with anxiety whether opportunity is available or not and also attendant with fear whether the people involved will be caught red-handed. This anxiety and fear and other emotional disturbances aggravate this illicit enjoyment. Therefore people are not able to give it up and on the other hand they spoil themselves by an excessive indulgence. The human mind is mad after the thing beyond its reach ignoring the one which is readily available."[21]

Cinema pictures and stories of to-day do not promote intellectual growth; nor to they stimulate didactic attitude of the people. Those with shaky mind are easily susceptible to cenema pictures and stories and are easily spoiled by them Youngsters of to-day are of the view that sense-control is uncivilized and is a symbol of defeatism. In order to avert the procarious situation, Mu. Va offers the following suggestions that sublimate the emotional drives of youngmen.

> "Youngmen should have an ideal before them. There should be a pastime in their life. Even fanaticism whether it be towards religion or for a political party is

sometimes preferable. There should be an attractive diversion ftom the outside; otherwise the thoughts of a youth cannot afford to be passive. They strongly affect the nervous system, make it emaciated and spoil the physical condition of the body."[22]

4. Love

In Mu. Va's works, the element of love takes a prominent place. In his earliar novels *Centamari*, *Pavai* and *Kallo ? Kaviyamo ?* One can see varied ideas about love. One can see, further that in his latter novels like *Nencil Oru Mul*, *Alli* and *Karit–tuntu* he has portrayed either explicitly with some exaggeration in certain cases the disappointment in love affairs. In the preface to his first novel *Centamarai* he points out three types of love as he says : "Some live by developing love, some have it by waiting and some get it by fervent search. The next novel *Pavai* seems to be the modern elucidation of the theory of love conventions of the ancient Tamils as adumbrated in *Tolkappiyam* and Cankam classics His novel *Kallo? Kaviyamo?* is a symbolic representation stating that the life of lust is like toddy and the life of love is like an epic. He further classifies present day love into two categories as 'Navel love' and 'Practical love'.[23] He has dealt with these two types off and on in his novels.

Though the free movement of an unmarried girl with a young man leads in all probability to love affairs, it looks as if Mu. Va. generally approves of such contacts in the sense of friendship. Even though there are risks in such movements he thinks that such risks should be overcome by patience and self control.

"Ancient time is totally different from that of ours The life and movement of a woman was very limited, limited to house and its surroundings. To-day the conditions are entirely different. It has become a necessity for any family girl to have her free movement with many members of her opposite sex. Opportunities are many for her free movements as they occur in bazaar, hos-

pitals, educational institutions, picture houses and many other places. For the sake of family affairs and children she has to move with businessmen, doctors, teachers, musicians and others... Therefore this is an age where the movement of women with men cannot be completely eschewed. In such a situation one should cultivate the habit of moving with men in a spirit of friendship.[24]"

When Mu. Va makes a reference to a relationship between a man and a woman prior to their marriage he does it with his utmost care and alertness as if it is the main problem of the twentieth century. He illustrates his views through his description of the family life of Alli-Cuppurattinam (*Alli*). The dialogue between Dr. Alli and Dr. Paramecuvari[25] further elucidates his points of view in the matter.

The most important point that he wants to emphasise is that unmarried youngmen and women should have a high sense of morality in their free movement and their life should be above board. But it is very unfortunate that some youngmen and women of today who hardly know the differcnce between love and lust come into contact with each other and are led to unforeseen incidents; later they come to grief. In this context Shaw's advice may serve as the becon light to the modern youths. "Love is an appetite. which like all other appetites, is destroyed for the moment by its gratification; no profession, promise or proposal made under its influence should blind anybody".[26] The youngmen and women of today without knowing the difference between love and lust raise the slogan "*katal*, *Katal*" – 'love, love'. They imagine at first sight that 'love is like the union of rain water with red earth' and later they are disappointed. Mu. Va points out this kind of disappointment through the life of Vativu (*Nencil Oru Mul*) Dr. Prameswari (*Alli*) and youngmen like Centiran *Akal-vilakku*. In *Malar-vili*, this love at first sight is termed by the author as 'love found in novels'. The author beautifully brings out in *Alli* the plausible reason for the disappointment of the young in their love episode.

"Does not the child fall frequently on the ground tottering its legs when it attempts to walk hastily before its full maturity? Similarly the body of a person fully develops before the mind attains its maturity for love affairs. The mind stimulates the body into action and gets suitable punishment for its error."[27]

When the novelist speaks in favour of life of love affairs he suggests certain restrictions. He points out many hurdles in it particularly in the twentieth century. Money is the *sine qua non* to lead a happy life in this century. For the whole world runs after it and there is no place for morality; no place for the right, no place for truth. When the sanctity of temples and the purity of the educational institutions are tainted, the plastic minds of youngsters are also spoiled. Young lovers also learn to mutually assess each other. The surroundings are to blame. Nobody is free from the anxiety about the future in view of the inadequate income. When one sheds one's fear one experiences a sense of independence and then only the caste distinctions disappear. Youngsters should not act in confusion till they find a solution for their independence. Women should be more responsible than men in this regard. When men err they can marry as many times as they like according to their commend over money; many come forward to give their daughters in marriage to such men. When women err, their lives also end. Even an astute reformer is reluctant to marry a girl who has once gone astray. Observing all these trends in the present day society the author states: "As long as men are anxious about their future life it would be better if the so-called 'love' takes a holiday for sometime."[28] The same idea has been emphasised both in *Malar-vili*, and in *Nencil Oru Mul*.[29]

5. Marriage

It makes us proud to think that the institution of marriage is held to be more sacred in our country than in any other country. That sacred institution will make or mar a person depending upon its proper function. It is highly superstitious or unwise if one thinks that any woman with any man

may court legal union and lead a happy wedded life. The defects or the elements of failure as found in the present day marriages are beautifully brought out by Mu. Va in his *Alli*, *Nencil Oru Mul*, *Akal-vilakku* and others.

> Where is learning? Where is culture? Instead of exchanging beauty for beauty, beauty for intelligence, beauty for love. I realized the tragedy of bartering beauty for money intelligence for money affection for money...One cannot see the tragedy of bartering beauty for money intelligenee for money and affection for money in a greater scale in other countries than in our country. If one listens to the various dialogues taking place among the people at the marriage function, one's mouth will shun to utter that our country is the only country heading towards spirituality."[30]

He does not approve a marriage which is meant for satisfying the parents who seek an alliance from an unknown family purely on the recommendations of an intermediary. He is against wasting money on feasts, musical concerts, dance performances and other festivities arranged for the sake of marriages. He expresses his opinions through the mouth of Murukayya and *(Vata-malar)* Aravali *(Alli, Nencil Oru Mul)*. He emphasises in many places the importance of the mutual agreement between a girl and a boy and holds that their competibility both mental and physical are more necessary than agreement in caste, religion and horoscope. The following statement of Aravali in *Alli* echoes the message of Mu. Va directed to the youngmen and women regarding the pre-cautions they have to take before they agree to a marriage.

> "People un-necessarily worry themselves about irrelevant matters and fail to observe the real and genuine features of eompatibility. It is necessary to consider whether the physical condition of a boy or a girl is fit for a marriage. If a boy hailing from a family of intellectuals is lean and thin in his physical appearance one should seek an alliance for him in a similar family of intellectuals so that one can get an alliance of similar

> physical condition. Instead of doing so if one takes a girl from a family whose profession requires physical exertion the girl may be strong and sturdy and physically she may not be suitable for the boy just referred to. If the marriage is forced between them, there will be physical maladjustment between the couple and the marriage may lead to an utter failure. Similar will be a failure if the marriage is arranged between a boy and a girl hailing from families of reverse order. Above all these the important aspect that one should devote one's attention to is the mental compatibility. If the mental compatibility is fit, then there will not be any difficulty."[31]

The message which Mu. Va gives deserves rethinking by every one of us.

> "There are two castes among men. One caste is of the firm view that one should live in a particular disciplined way. The other caste is of the view that one can live in whatever way regardless of discipline and moral code. Inter-marriages between these two castes are prohibited."[32]

6. Education

Mu. Va has witnessed by his own experience of more than three decades many defects in the educational field. He has ventilated these defects as well as the reasons for such defects in many of his writings. According to him the major reason for all the evil and restlessness prevailing in the society of to-day is found to be the imbalance in planning the educational system.

> "The education which the youngmen of today receive from the educational institution does not evoke any sympathy towards the poor; nor does it stir any feeling for the state of affairs as a result of the defective system. It instils selfishness to the core to the effect that one should live with all comforts at his command

> whatever may be the precarious conditions of others."[33]

This statement of Mu. Va deserves reflection. He has also pointed out the defects in many contexts in his novels. The method of examination not only stifless their interest in study but also saps the very vitality of both the body and mind of the students. The educational system, according to his, planned and put in practice by the English people in the pre-independent days has spoiled the precious time of the life of the students.

> "The examination system should go. It is a deadly disease both for the physical well-being and mental health of youngmen and women. It spoils the growth and development of youths who are the perennial source of wealth to the country."[34]

> "It is sufficient if we make the brain intelligent; they (planners) meet with utter failure in their attempt to make the brain loaded with useless facts."[35]

These statements respectively of Prof. Ciralar and Meyyappan reveal how Mu. Va has keenly observed the defects in the educational system. Another blind spot in the system is in the question of medium of instruction. In these days of rapid growth of science and technology the mental equipment of young students in different parts of the world is not even. A student with English as his mother tongue not only learns more but also his speed of learning is rapid. But as a student whose mother tongue is other than English has not only to learn English as a language but also the other subjects, his speed of learning is not fast and he has no depth of knowledge. Mu. Va has pointed out this defect in his *Akal-vilakku*.

> "In English universities science history and other subjects are taught in the English medium. The method has been blindly followed here. The straight road to our mind is Tamil. Without minding this, the teachers teach the subjects through the medium of English. When

the method of teaching is wrong it is but natural that the quantum of learning will be less and imperfect. Therefore, the short-cut method, whieh is natural method in this case is the only way for its success".[36]

This is a statement made by a student (Malan) in that novel. According to the philosophy of education of Mu. Va one is to understand that the present system of education should be replaced by a sound system of education, that the examination system which gives more weightage to memorization should be replaced by a system which gives importance to the various skills of learning and that the medium of teaching and learning should be the mother-tongue.

7. Art and Life

Every artist will have some ideas about his art and some basic views about the objectives of art. These ideas and views will somehow find a place in the creative works. Poet Ilanko the author of *Cilappatikaram* has said the following three objectives namely '*dharma*' (Aram) will become the God of Death to kings who swerve from the path of right-courses, great men adore a chaste lady of great fame, and destiny will manifest itself and be fulfilled[37], before setting out his task. The aim of the National Poet Bharathi, as he himself has stated, is to celebrate the glories of the universe by the Tamil songs of praise[38]. Even the grammarian Pavananti mentions that the aim of any literature is to attain virtue, wealth, happiness and salvation.[39] Though the genesis of an art is intended only as an entertainment and pastime, its function later became as to improve one's life and modify it as one of culture.

Besides the novels of Mu. Va his other works help us to know his views about art.

"There are two types of persons who like art. Some take it as their pastime. Others take to it with an aim of elevating their life and finding new principles for the betterment of their life. I belong to the second category of persons"[40].

This statement of Mu. Va when placed in juxtaposition to the following statement found in his other works of criticism will give us a clear picture of his views on art.

> "It is not sufficient for one to be attracted by one's own eyes and ears; they are satiable. Art gives a permanent happiness only if it is experienced with the basic and fundamental emotional sentiments of sacrifice, heroism, love and similar other sentiments.

What has been explicitly mentioned by Mu. Va as his aims and views of art, have been implicitly mentioned through the characters of his novels. His *Karit-tuntu* and *Malar-vili* are the two novels based on the life of artists. As Somerset Maugham in his *Moon and Sixpence* has portrayed the life of an artist as one of ups and downs, blemish and merit and with palatable fineness, Mu. Va also has created his *Karit-tuntu* in an artistic fineness. In Mokan's earlier life art stands for pomp and pleasure and for worldly gains. Here, one sees an utter failure in the family life of Mokan and Nirmala. In his later life when he lives with Ponni the same art serves the purposes of his family life. Here he does not use his family life as a ladder to attain his social status. Mu. Va has shown through the life of Kancanai in *Malar-vili* how the exuberant feeling and attachment in art or sense of art have spoiled the normal life of a person. Kancanai forgets her duties about her family life because of her undue interest in art and her avarice for money. When she meets with disappointment she ends her own life tragically· Lastly, what has been stated by Mu. Va in the following passage about art and life will be food for thought and reflection.

> "A knife can be used both for good and bad purposes. It can be used to fell the trees in the forest or to cut the head of person. Similar is the function of art also. No other medium is so useful as art to make one's mind soar high and with uncontrollable speed. But control of senses will yield good fruits; if one diverts his mind dived deep in dance and music and literature and painting to service and sacrifice one

can really soar high in worldly life and live a full and harmonious life with satisfaction and happiness."[42]

So, in the final analysis, it can be concluded that Mu. Va's philosophy of life becomes an integral part of his writings serving the function of reinforcing the reader's interest through meaningful philosophic comments on the many issues, problems and perplexities of the day-to-day life of the modern man. It simultaneously ennobles his work of art by enriching its thought-content.

NOTES :

1. *Paradise Lost Books IX and X*, Preface.
2. *Kayamai*, p. 193.
3. *Vata-malar*, pp. 173-174.
4. A letter dated 7-10-1972 addressed to Dr. P. Sourirajan, Lecturer in Tamil, S.V University, Tirupati (A.P.).
5. *Alli*, pp. 109-110.
6. *Nencil Oru Mul*, pp. 323, 325 and *Man-kuticai*, p. 169,
7. *Ends and Means*, p. 229
8. *Religion and Culture*, p. 8.
9. *Nencil Oru Mul*, p. 313
10. *Vata-malar*, pp. 308-309.
11. H.G. Wells, *W. Somerset Maugham's Selected Prefaces and Introductions*. p. 8.
12. *Centamarai*, pp. 81-82.
13. *Ulakap-parstu*, p. 48.
14. *Ends and Means*, p. 39.
15. *Vata-malar*, p. 158
16. *Aramum-araciyalum*. p. 68.
17. *Kural*, 948.
18. *Mannin-matippu*, pp. 41042.
19. *Man-kuticai*, p. 504.
20. *Everbody's Political What's What*, p. 176.
21. *Alli*, pp. 139-140.
22. ibid, p. 137,
23. *Malar-vili*, p 155.
24. *Akal-vilakku*, p. 181.
25. *Alli*. pp. 266-270.
26. *Everybody's Political What's What*, p. 169.
27. *Alli*, p. 270.
28. *Pavai*, p. 187.
29. *Malar-vili*, p. 156 and *Nencil Oru Mul*, pp. 127-127.
30. *Akal-vilakku*, pp. 275-276.
31. *Alli*. pp. 143-144.
32. ibid, p. 322.
33. *Paliyum Pavamum*, p. 16.
34. *Perramanan*, p.239.
35. *Mankuticai*, p. 264.
36. *Akal-vilakku*, p. 121.
37. *Cilappatikaram*, Patikam.
38. *Bnaratiyar Kavitaikal*, Kani-nilam Ventum-3.
39. *Nannol* Potup-payiram, Cut 10.
40. *Tamil Oli*, Vol. 6, 1966-67 (Magazine of the Tamil Association of the University of Malaya) p. 44.
41. *Ilakkiat-tiran*, p. 227.
42. *Malar-vili*, p. 294.

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